

S. 296.A



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

The Quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

No. 31

November 1990

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BARROW COMMON, BRANCASTER

Recording Field meeting, 12 August 1990

Barrow Common occupies an area of glaciated sand and gravel just inland from Brancaster Staithes, around 150' above sea level (hence giving some fine views of the coast), falling away abruptly to Valley Farm to the east, and more gradually to woodland to the south. There are a few gravel-pits, abandoned and overgrown apart from one just to the east of the north/south bisecting road.

The common was grazed until the early 70's (G. Beckett), but is now dominated by Gorse and Bracken, with incipient scrub, including some healthy-looking young Oaks. Along the border with Gas Plantation to the south there is not surprisingly an intermediate sparsely timbered zone.

The Society's visit co-incided with one of the driest periods in recent years, so that many of the smaller plants especially were very dried up, if not dead. However, there had been no recent fires. Fortunately, the vascular plants and bryophytes had been surveyed within the last three years by other individuals and organisations, who have kindly made their records available. Invertebrate animals were well represented and there were some dozen species of birds seen or heard.

A total of 12 spider sp. were recorded by Rex Hancy, and 3 others by Reg and Lil Evans, who were principally concerned with Fungi. Although the dry conditions were hardly conducive to Mycology, they were delighted to find a top-quality specimen of *Volvariella bombycinus*, a gill-fungus which they had not previously recorded in Norfolk, and which was growing in a crevice 8 feet up in an Ash tree!

I am at present collating all the data, which will later be available for any members interested.

Paul Banham, Chairman, Research Committee.



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OBITUARY: John Michael Last (1941-1990)

Few members of the Society could claim to know John for he was a very private person. For thirty years he had worked at Lowestoft Fisheries Department. He was never happier than at weekends spent at the family home: The Mill House, Corpusty. Here, working with his brother Roger, he created a most original garden. His special love was the play of water and a combination of streams, pools and fountains was a constant delight. The sound and movement of water is most appropriate for the garden of a water-mill.

A highly skilled and very knowledgeable gardener, John not only maintained the garden in an immaculate condition, but was constantly creating new features. Always original, his designs extended to classical temples adorned with frescoes, grottos, gothic ruins, bridges and terraces. The garden a plantsman's paradise - was featured in several publications including "The Englishman's Garden" and "English Country Gardens".

My wife and I made a point of visiting Corpusty Mill garden each spring. John was never too busy to escort us as we explored and returned to old favourites. He will be remembered by naturalists for his annual selection of mammal vignettes gracing the pages of the Norfolk Mammal Report. For over two decades he provided exquisite drawings. He also recorded the birds appearing in the vicinity of the Mill. It gave him great pleasure to confirm successful breeding of Grey Wagtails there earlier this year after a long period of absence. He showed us the nest within inches of the mill-race.

John was a very talented artist. His skills were revealed to a wider audience through publication of Jarrold's wildlife calendars and Christmas cards in aid of Norfolk Churches Trust. He also provided line drawings for Peter Tate's "East Anglia and Its Birds".

Following much persuasion John agreed to submit water colours for the Norfolk Naturalists Trust Christmas cards. Publication led to a wealth of private commissions. Special favourites included harvest mice and red squirrels. Exhibitions of John's paintings were mounted in the Assembly House, Norwich and at Picturecraft, Gallery Holt.

Michael J. Seago.

F.W. FROHAWK : HIS LIFE AND WORK

Books these days have a short life (almost a sell-by date!) and after three years, warehouse room is needed for more recently published titles. The Crowood Press made *F.W. Frohawk: His Life and Work* out of print earlier this year and as author I have bought up the remainder stock.

Copies of this colourful, fully illustrated hardback book are now available at a much reduced price. The text includes a blend of biography, autobiography (from FWF's memoir), the natural history world around the turn of the century and Frohawk's varied work as artist and book illustrator, lepidopterist and field ornithologist. Signed copies can be obtained from Dr June Chatfield, Anglefield, 44, Ashdell Road, Alton, Hampshire. GU34 2TA at £7.50 inclusive of postage.

A review of this book can be found in Natterjack No.18 by Ken Durrant, with a second opinion by Colin Dack.

BRITISH MUSEUM
(NATURAL HISTORY)

- 8 MAR 1991

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HOUSEMARTINS SAGA

On Sunday 5th August 1990 Anne Brewster (Chairman), Ken Durrant (President), and myself Colin Dack (Membership Secretary), represented the Society at Hill Farm open day run by the National Trust at Itteringham. There we met the Reverend Keith Hawkes (Diocesan Rural Officer). He told us a saga of three baby Housemartins and I asked him if he would write it down for Natterjack here is his letter.

As requested, I am recalling the little saga of the three Housemartins chicks I found on the ground after their mud nest had come away from the Rectory eaves. I suppose because of the very dry and exceptionally hot weather? Or just a poor building job. Actually it had been part of a "double dweller" (semidetached), the other half still operational and housing the usual family now just about to fly.

What to do ? I had not the faintest idea of how to rehouse these little chicks, all seemingly healthy but a long way from fully grown. Then I remembered the other nest some 10 to 12 feet along the eaves which I could tell from the recent lack of droppings was now vacant. I carefully shaped the tiny chicks tucking in their little wings and feet and by balancing through one of the bedroom windows "posted" them one at a time through the "letter box" opening of the vacant nest.

Then I waited. First of all "Mum" kept returning to the shattered remains of the fallen nest, still attached to the wall, looking around in a very bemused way. I was not hopeful and I felt that if the chicks were not fed quickly they would certainly not survive, however in the morning there were the usual tell tail signs on the door step below the nest that there was definitely something happening.

Well it's good news because all three chicks can now be seen peeping out of their new home and being fed at frequent intervals. It is a good feeling that the three will thrive and eventually fly away in due course, hopefully to return.

P.S. I have recently spoken to Keith on the telephone and he tells me that all three chicks fledged successfully. Also w met Keith on the Sunday and I received this contribution on the following Wednesday. If only the other contributors could be as quick!

STOP PRESS:

The Society's latest occasional publication (*The Birds of Great Yarmouth* by Society member Peter Allard) will be published in November.

128 pages in length, it includes full details of all species appearing within a five-mile radius of Yarmouth town centre. illustrated in colour and black & white. An additional feature is a unique collection of R.A. Richardson vignettes.

A full review will appear in the Eastern Daily Press at the time of publication.

Michael J. Seago.

THE PEPPERED MOTH

9th June 1990.

This evening in my garden, I discovered a single specimen of the Peppered Moth *Biston carbonaria* at rest on the rear wall of my house. This is a most interesting and a much studied species of moth and its range extends throughout Europe and Asia.

It was known to naturalists and entomologists during the eighteenth century in its normal form, those specimens being white with black speckling on the wings. They were found throughout most of Britain. However, during the 1840s, a black variety was found in Manchester and it was soon found that after a while, most of the specimens found and those collected in that area, were black. Throughout the northern industrial area, the black variety was replacing the former and this trend soon spread, so that 90% of all specimens found were black, the speckled form being found more in southern areas.

This phenomena became known as industrial melanism, a typical case where nature has made changes to suit the changing environment. Specimens of the normal colouring when resting on the trunks of trees that have become blackened by industrial fumes and smoke, have little or no natural camouflage against their predators, and being conspicuous, become easy prey for such as birds who normally catch their prey by sight. Specimens of the normal colouration when resting on lichen covered tree trunks, are indeed, difficult to spot. They therefore have adapted their genetics to suit their surrounding in order to protect themselves. Certain other moths and insects have also adapted to these changes.

When I have collected black specimens of the Peppered Moth, I have often tried to place them on a light coloured background, but those that have not flown off, have invariably crawled on to a dark coloured surface in order to rest.

Tony Brown.

BIRD & MAMMAL REPORTS - OLD NUMBERS

Our stocks of Bird & Mammal Reports prior to 1971 are now exhausted. We occasionally receive requests for old back numbers from people wishing to complete runs. If any members plan to throw away any old issues when clearing out their bookshelves, the Society would be happy to receive them for stock. Copies in good condition are sold, thus aiding our funds.

D. A. Dorling (Honorary Treasurer).

BRITISH BIRDS MAGAZINE

Enclosed with this issue of Natterjack is the usual annual leaflet inviting subscription to the monthly magazine "British Birds".

Members of this Society are eligible for the concessionary rate of subscription.

The magazine, now frequently illustrated in colour, contains a wide variety of articles on the birds of Britain and Western Europe.

GRASSHOPPERS AND ALLIED SPECIES

The survey of the county orthoptera is progressing well, but we still need all your records of grasshoppers, bush-crickets, groundhoppers and earwigs.

Data required are: species, 4 or 6 figure grid reference, locality, habitat, name of recorder.

Please submit all records by the end of November to: D. Richmond, 42, Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk. NR10 4LS.

HEGGATT HALL

Owing to the dry weather it is perhaps not surprising that few 'toadstools' were found.

Efforts were made to record other kinds of fungi with a total of 32 species.

A dozen galls were added to our list to which A Brewster and M Woolner made useful additions.

Reg & Lil Evans.

LUMINOUS FUNGI

We have recently received a piece of wood from an old tree stump. This glowed in the dark producing a steady light, on examination fungal threads were to be found in the luminous area,

It has been suggested that most (if not all) of the luminous wood in Britain is due to the Honey fungus *Armillaria mellea*, and that cultures containing the young rhizomorphs exhibit this property.

Other mycologists have said that the luminosity has appeared in Butt Rot *Heterobasidion annosus*, the Sulphur Polypore *Laetiporus sulphureus* and *Xylaria polymorpha*. The spores of *Mycena rorida* have also been named.

We have not found this to be so in the specimens we have seen but we are still looking!

Reg & Lil Evans.

POSTER

Will members please try to get the poster for the Society enclosed with this Natterjack (if received in time for this mailing) put on display. (Not in any of the Norfolk Library's as they will be being supplied direct).

MEMBERSHIP CARDS This year as in most years I have had a number of letters from members asking for membership cards. The Society does not have membership cards. Some members are getting the Society mixed with the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust. They do have membership card. Colin Dack. Membership Sec.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ, to arrive not later than 1st January 1991. Contributions sent after this date will not be accepted for the February Natterjack.

THE ZEBRA MUSSEL IS STILL WITH US

In the War and in the immediate post war years the broads were overrun by *Dreissena polymorpha* pallas, the Zebra Mussel. This freshwater mussel had first been noticed in this country in 1824 when it was found in the London Docks, having been presumably imported from Eastern Europe. It is famous for mass development there. The way in which it overran Lake Balaton in Hungary is typical : up to 1933 10 specimens had been collected but by 1935 there were estimated 30,000 m^{-2} .

The zebra mussel was first reported from the broads by A.J. Rudd who found it in Oulton Broad. It was soon to be found in the rest of the broads which had connections with the rivers and in the Ormesby group of broads. It had been imported into the Ormesby Broads down the pipeline from the river Bure at Horning, parts of which were reduced from 24" dia to 9" dia by growths of the mussels on the inside.

But from the mid fifties onwards a decline in numbers was noticeable. The Mussel is normally attached to piling about 1.5 to 2 m below the water surface or to the shells of *Anodonta cygnea*, the Swan Mussel. It leaves typical groups of threads on the Swan Mussel shell and this is the easiest way of detecting its presence. In the 1970s and 1980s I looked for it everywhere in broadland without success. The Zebra Mussel seemed to have died out.

Recently I met Dick Briggs who works alongside Oulton Broad. He told me that the musels were still there, and to prove it he telephoned me when they had just removed a piece of piling from the broad. He got a nice collection of mussels for me from about 5 ft below the surface.

The population appeared to be made up of only last year's mussels and this year's mussels. Only 3 dead mussel shells were found in the sample of over 200 mussels. These empty shells were all slightly smaller than the "second year mean" of 17.16 mm, (fig 1) the largest mussel seen was 26 mm long. There were very many young mussels still in the stage where they crawl around very actively. No velliger larvae were seen. The mussels were associated with fresh-water sponges.

It would seem from these measurements that the piles, which were years old, had only been occupied by the present population from last summer. It is possible that the two warm summers of 1989 and 1990 have had something to do with the reappearance of *Dreissena* on this spot : their breeding is said to be temperature regulated with a threshold temperature of 16 degrees C.

It would be nice to hear from other observers who have found *Dreissena polymorpha* recently.

Keith Clarke.

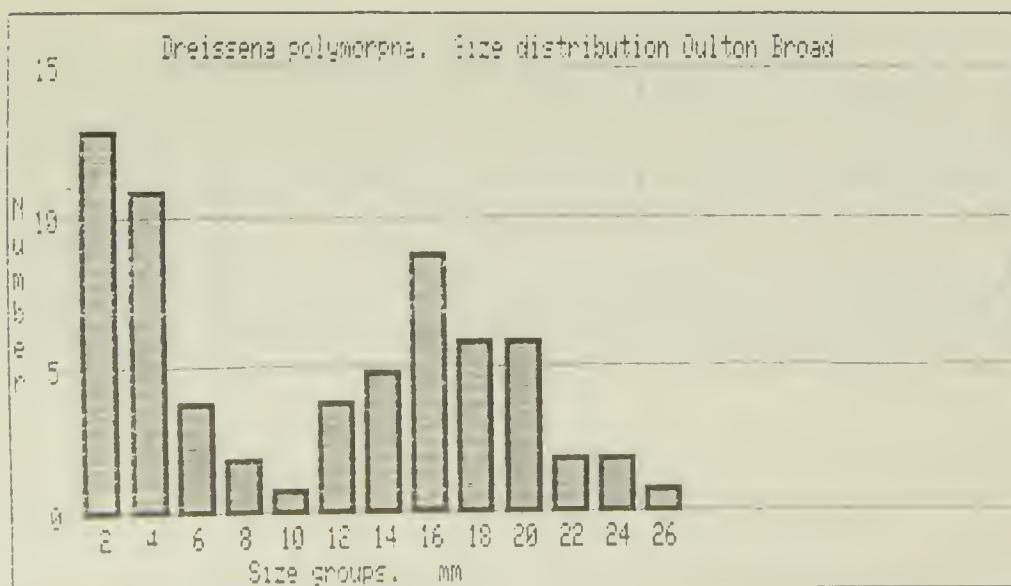


Figure 1. Length distribution of a group of 66 mussels taken from submerged piling at Oulton Broad.

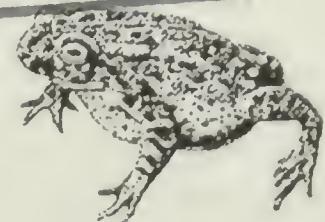
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Febuary 1991

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Society will be held at 19.30 hours on Wednesday 27th March 1991 in the City Library Lecture Theatre, Norwich.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting. (14th March 1990)
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Presentation of Chairman's Report.
5. Presentation of Treasurer's Report and the Income and Expenditure Account for 1990.
6. Presentation of the Council nomination for the President of the Society for 1991-92. Professor H. Lamb.
7. Presentation of Officers and Council. The Secretary has received the following nominations, all nominees having consented to serve.
Vice-President. (As Vice-Presidents are elected for life, only new nominations are subject to election.)

Vice-President:-

Chairman
General Secretary
Assistant Secretary
Treasurer
Assistant Treasurer
Chairman, Membership Committee
Secretary, Membership Committee
Chairman, Programme Committee
Secretary, Programme Committee
Chairman, Publications Committee
Secretary, Publications Committee
Chairman, Research Committee
Secretary, Research Committee
Honorary Auditor
Elected Council Members to serve for three years, D. Richmond Dr. R. Hamond
(Retiring 1994)

Mr. R. Evans.
Mrs. A. Brewster
A. L. Bull
Mrs. J. Negal
D. A. Dorling
M. J. Woolner
R. Hancy
C. R. Dack
M. J. C. Ewles
Mrs. C. W. Haines
R. Jones
R. E. (Dick) Jones
P. R. Banham
E. Cross
J. E. Timbers
C. Neale Mrs. M. Cooper

Any other nominations may be received from members for any of the above posts other than Vice-presidents, duly proposed and seconded and with the nominees written consent, not less than seven clear days before the A.G.M. to (Gen. Sec)
8. Any other business.

Following the A.G.M., The Presidential Address: "British Galls" Postponed from 6th February.

Mr. Reg Evans - Nomination for office as a Vice President

Proposed by Colin Dack, Seconded by Reg Jones.

In the past fifteen years since their return to Norfolk Reg & Lil Evans have collected over 27,000 records (from all over the county) covering over 2,300 species.

Reg has contributed to various surveys both here and in Europe.

In 1988 he received the Benefactor Medal from the British Mycological Society. This is a great honour in recognition of work done in the field of Mycology.

His studies also include insects associated with fungi, he also has added several species of fungus gnats to the Norfolk list.

Reg is a past President of the Society, his Presidential Address was "Curiosities of Nature". He has given many talks illustrated with his own clear and informative drawings. He has also taken part in Exhibitions and led numerous fungus forays. His knowledge and enthusiasm has been passed on to many members, not only in the study of fungi but also insects, spiders, galls and plants.

We would like it to go on record just how much his wife Lil has supported, encouraged and worked with Reg.

Colin Dack and Reg Jones.

TED ELLIS NATURE RESERVE AT WHEATFEN

Describing his home in the beautiful marshes, carrs and wild woodlands of Wheatfen, Ted Ellis once said his aim had been "to look after it by not looking after it". For him, the over-tidying of natural areas until they had lost their rambling, untamed character was the worst of sins. On the other hand Ted had worked hard to study and record what was there, and to actively protect its diversity by encouraging the rarer plants and animals where possible.

One of his surveys in the mid nineteen thirties was on the flora of Old Mill Marsh when he recorded over 93 species of flowering plants. The Society re-surveyed this marsh with Ted over the summer of 1972 when only 88 species were noted. Dorothy Maxey observed that "the whole fen has degenerated botanically and really needs mowing or grazing to increase the numbers of species again".

Since the Ted Ellis Trust acquired the Reserve in 1987 it has attempted to manage it to meet both Ted's wishes of an untamed Broadland environment yet to balance this with the creation of diverse habitats to encourage a variety of plants and animals to flourish. Over the last three years Old Mill Marsh has seen extensive scrub clearance and planned management of selected areas through different mowing patterns. The dykes, long infilled since the nineteen thirties, have been re-dug and the drainage of the fen returned to its previous system. In the summer of 1990 Alec Bull walked the marsh with me and recorded over 100 different plant species. Charles Barstad and John Tooly also surveyed the marsh and added one or two species to the new list. The five species of orchids recorded in 1934 had been reduced to one by 1972 and today none remain. However, other species have colonised the marsh and we are hopeful that in time orchids will once again flourish in the fen.

The changing flora of Old Mill Marsh covering the last fifty years is being collated and will be available to visitors and botanists in the near future. The Society is planning a visit to Wheatfen this summer so botanists be warned that we shall be looking for your help in the continuation of the surveys.

Roy Baker.

MEMBERS OF THE NORFOLK NATURALISTS' TRUST

A Members Conference has been arranged for Saturday 13th April 1991 at the University of East Anglia. The theme will be "The Changing Environment - the Role of the Trust."

Details and booking form from Jill Benfield, Conference Organiser, Norfolk Naturalists' Trust, 72, Cathedral Close, Norwich. NR1 4DF.

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FUNGUS FORAY

A meeting had been arranged for 4th November at Bridgham picnic site, which we had visited several times before. In spite of the cold, showery weather, 42 members attended, including several from the British Mycological Society.

At least 4 new records for Norfolk were made and a total of 155 species were identified. Most of these were of the larger fungi, but David Fagg added a new record by looking for the smaller fungi *Discomycetes* in the leaf litter.

We believe all the forayers saw good examples of the very poisonous Death Cap *Amanita phalloides* which was present in fair numbers. Beginners seem to have been surprised at the considerable range of fungi in the area.

Next year (1991) we shall have another meeting at this site, since it continues to produce new records on each visit.

Come to the next foray!

Reg & Lil Evans.



Amanita phalloides
"Death Cap"

House Martins

Following the article in the last Natterjack I received the following from B.D. Harding.

Nesting adaptability of House Martins Two instances in summer 1990 seem to indicate that House Martin *Delichon urbica* has no problems in adapting to a new nesting environment when its original mud nest has been dislodged. In the first case, a nest containing young in Brundall, Norfolk, was dislodged in strong winds from under the apex of a semi-detached house. The houseowner recovered the young and the remains of the nest from the lawn and placed them in a plant-pot; this was then placed in a 'Kodak' photographers' bag and hung from the latch of the bedroom window. The adults were soon feeding the young, which eventually fledged. A second nest later replaced the original, and held young, but it is not known whether the same adults were involved. In the second case. The Eastern Daily Press published an article concerning a pair of house Martins at Saxthorpe, Norfolk, whose nest became dislodged. The owners of the property replaced the nest with a 2-litre plastic squash bottle with a hole cut in the side and a smaller one in the bottom to enable water to drain away. The nesting material and four young were transferred to the makeshift nest, which was fixed under the eaves of the bungalow by string attached to a cup-hook; before long, the adults were feeding the young. B.D. Harding. This appeared in British Birds Vol 77 157-158.

About 1980 a friend ask me to look at the North end of his house, a pair of House Martins were trying to build a nest, but they had it all wrong. The foundations of the nest went from the apex to almost the end of the sloping eaves. Had they got their drawing the wrong way up? C.R.D.

Spiders - A Workshop for beginners

An evening workshop session will be held in the Natural History Department, Norwich Castle on Thursday 12th September 1991 at 7.30 p.m.

To clarify the aims of this first meeting of a projected series, we will try to answer the following questions:

- Why should I look for spiders?
- Where?
- What equipment do I need?
- What can I read?
- How many can I expect to identify?
- How do I begin to sort them out?
- Where do I go next?

We hope part of the answer to the last question will be Workshop No.2.



PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

Will members please note the April meeting is on Wednesday 17th not 7th, as my typing mistake in Natterjack No. 30. The Illustrated talk is "In the Eye of the Beholder" by Mrs. Joyce Robinson.

EXCURSION TO HOLKHAM

Sunday 27 January 1991

Eighteen members gathered at Lady Anne's Drive at Holkham to look for any winter migrants in the area. The weather was cloudy and cool but otherwise ideal for a winter walk along the shore and through the woods.

We began by walking over the extensive beach towards the distant shore-line noticing, as we went, the formation of an embryo salt-marsh in the area of beach between the inner and outer dune systems. It was in this area that we noted a large party of small birds feeding on the seeds washed up by the tides and were pleased to see that there were a number of Snow Buntings amongst them.

Off shore we saw a party of diving ducks made up of 9 or so Goldeneyes including some fine male birds, a drake Red-breasted Merganser and two Long-tailed Ducks. Seeing these three species together was a great pleasure. Various gulls were also seen with small numbers of Sanderling feeding near to the tide-line.

Later we looked across the fresh water marshes from the dune tops and were treated to the distant sight of hundreds, if not thousands, of geese. There was one large party of Brents feeding in their characteristically tight-packed flock whilst the many Pink-footed Geese were spread more widely with constant activity as small parties moved about the area.

Walking through the pines did not produce as many birds as we had hoped, but were able to see, at close quarters, a large flock of Wigeon in one of the pools recently created on the marsh. Other species of duck were also present in small numbers.

A large party of Twites were seen near the car park and many geese were in view whilst we had lunch. The hardy few who stayed on to the bitter end were given a frustratingly brief sighting of a flock of Redpolls but they refused to allow close inspection to confirm their identity as Mealy or even Arctic!

It was a pleasant outing and 50 species were recorded, including a Barn Owl seen along the roadside towards Wells at dusk.

Don Dorling.

MICROSCOPY GROUP

Programme for 1991

All meetings are held in the Castle Museum, Norwich, at 7.30 p.m. unless otherwise stated. All include opportunities for "Gossip" as well as the featured items.

Tuesday Derek Excell will illustrate some of the fascinating history of the instruments used in microscopy.
19 February

Thursday Entomological Gossip evening. Malcolm Thain has some extraordinary photographs of moth antennae under the scanning electron microscope. Bring along samples, queries, exhibits on everything entomological.
4 April

Saturday An afternoon expedition to Marston Marshes to sample the freshwater life. Meet at the reserve entrance on Marston Lane (TG217056) at 1.30. Return to Castle at 3.30 to sort and discuss our finds.
1 June

Tuesday Spiders under the stereomicroscope. Demonstrated by Rex Hancy. We may find some interesting specimens behind the bookcase!
23 July

Thursday Animals in the house. Please don't bring Tiddles or Fido! Anything else that wriggles runs or crawls in and around the house. Don't forget to look in the old nests under the eaves.
19 September

Tuesday General Gossip Evening. A quick review of the year and a look ahead to plan for 1992. Bring anything else you would like to discuss, exhibit or query.
19 November

NORFOLK MOTH SURVEY

The following meetings are to be held in the Castle Museum at 7.30 p.m.

21st March 1991 - Moss Taylor will be presenting a "Beginner's view of Moths"

25th April 1991 - A workshop, led by Gerry Haggett, about identifying carpet moths (the ones that look like carpets, not the ones that eat them).

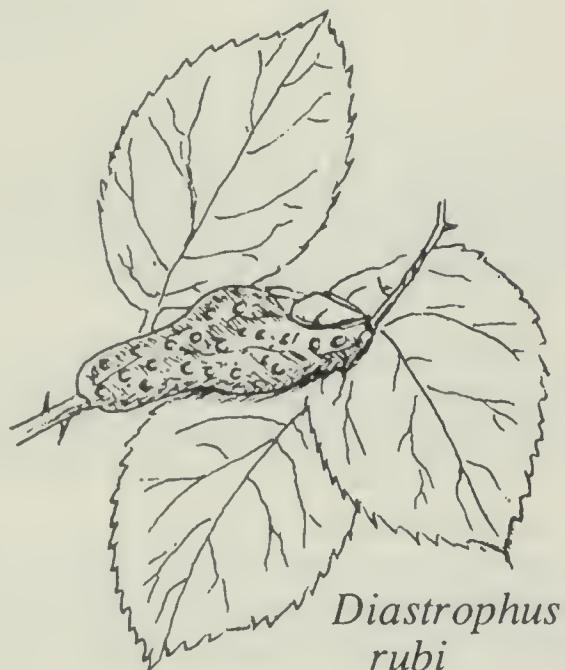
A very full programme of field meetings is planned for 1991. For details write to Tony Irwin at the Castle Museum, Norwich NR1 3JU.

GALL RECORD FOR FOXLEY WOOD, FOXLEY, NORFOLK

TG051228 29 September 1990

GALL MITES: *Eriophyes tetanothorax*

E	<i>avellanae</i>	Sallow
E.	<i>similis</i>	Hazel
E.	<i>macrochelus</i>	Blackthorn
E	<i>macrorhynchus</i>	Maple
Cecidophyopsis atrichus		Maple
E.	<i>goniothorax typicus</i>	Stitchwort
E.	<i>varius</i>	Hawthorn
E.	<i>tiliae typicus</i>	Poplar
		Lime



GALL MIDGE:

Rhabdophaga rosaria	Sallow
Harmandia globuli	Aspen
Syndiplosis petiola	Aspen
Dasyneura marginemtorquens	Sallow
D. <i>ulmariae</i>	Meadowsweet
D. <i>fraxini</i>	Ash
D. <i>crataegi</i>	Hawthorn
Macrodiplosis dryobia	Oak

SMUT:

<i>Urocystis pompholygodes</i>	Buttercup
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SAWFLY:

<i>Pontania proxima</i>	Sallow
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PLANT LOUSE:

<i>Psyllopsis fraxini</i>	Ash
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AGROMYZID FLY:

<i>Phytomyza ilicis</i>	Holly
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GALL GNAT

<i>Jaapiella veronicae</i>	Speedwell
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GALL WASP

<i>Diplolepis eglantiae</i>	Rose
D. <i>nervosus</i>	Rose
D. <i>rosae</i>	Rose
<i>Diastrophus rubi</i>	Bramble
<i>Andricus quercus-folii</i>	Oak
A. <i>kollari</i>	Oak
A. <i>lignicola</i>	Oak
<i>Biorhiza pallida</i>	Oak
<i>Neuroterus numismalis</i>	Oak
N. <i>quercus baccarum</i>	Oak
N. <i>albipes</i>	Oak
<i>Andricus ostreus</i>	Oak
A. <i>curvator</i>	Oak
<i>Cynips divisa</i>	Oak
<i>Xestophanes brevitarsis</i>	Tormentil



GREY SQUIRRELS

I recently observed a Grey Squirrel sitting beside a small private lake, in the process of eating a dead roach, which it left behind on my approach.

I had previously no idea that fish formed part of the diet of the grey squirrel. I thought that possibly readers of Natterjack may be able to help with comments on this matter. Any correspondence would be most welcome.

Please send any letters to Tony Brown 16 Mariners Park Close, Hopton, Gt. Yarmouth, Norfolk. NR31 9DQ
Tony Brown.

WHAT'S ON OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

Forestry commission

Thetford Forest Park:- The Ecology of a Pine Forest

New Hall, Cambridge. Saturday and Sunday 13th & 14th April.

The Symposium will draw together the results of ecological research carried out over the past twenty years in Thetford Forest, one of the largest man made forests in Europe. The aim is to discuss research studies in the context of the management, ecology and conservation value of the forest.

There are twenty four papers to be presented covering the whole range of wildlife in the forest from Lichens to higher plants to butterflies and moths, rabbits and deer. In some cases several speakers will be involved with any one subject, including some of our members. e.g Peter Lambley, Mike Hall and Nick Gibbons.

The conference fee is £5. The two day course can be fully residential, i.e full board and accommodation in which case the total is £97.30, or one can pay the conference fee and for as many meals they wish to participate in. There are 160 places, so early application is advised to:- Miss. C.A. Woods, Wildlife to Conservation Research Branch, Forestry Commission, Forest Research Station, Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LH

HALT HALL

An Introduction to the Plants of Coastal Habitats

19th-21th July 1991
Tutor. Mr. P.J. Wanstall B.sc., M.I.Biol., F.L.S.,

The 20th and 21th of July will be spent studying the plants of coastal habitats followed by practical sessions and discussions at the end of the day. Cost, £55 per person. Booking forms available from:- The Warden, Holt Hall Residential and Field study Center. Kelling Road, Holt NR25 7DU.

Posters would any member who can have a one or more Society Posters displayed please contact Colin Dack.

Production

This issue of the Norfolk Natterjack was created using Impression 2 (Desk Top Publishing) Draw and Paint software. Using an Acorn Archimedes computer with 4MB Ram, and 20MB Hard disc, Using a Scan-Light Junior to scan in drawing. All proofing, layout checks and final art work were output through a Hewlett Packard LaserJet III Printer. Fungi and Gall drawing by Reg Evans. Natterjack size 2768 words.

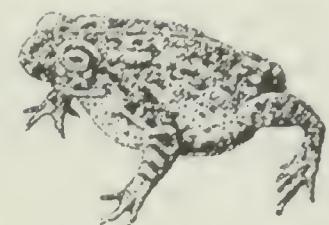
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ, to arrive not later than 1st April 1991. Contributions sent after this date will not be accepted for the May Natterjack.

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THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Number 33

May 1991

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

CHANCE MEETING IN RHODES

This year I visited Rhodes in the second half of March to look at the flowers. The date may sound early to many people but this is the eastern end of the Mediterranean and flowering is a week or two in advance of places not much further west, such as Crete. For example, the pyramidal orchid, *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, was in full bloom, whereas in Crete, in my experience, it would not reach that stage until about the second week in April, while in Majorca flowering would not occur before the end of that month.

What can be said of Rhodes as a place to seek flowers? Certainly in the vicinity of Rhodes town the effects of tourism are all too apparent. Nevertheless, a few miles to the south, and the island is over sixty miles in length, there is an appreciable amount of country worthy of exploration and, unlike many other places, organised parties were not in evidence. During my first week I never saw anyone who looked remotely interested in flowers. In the second week I made two contacts with enthusiasts.

The first encounter was near the summit of the mountain, Profitis Elias. It is tree-covered and as I approached the top I noted a parked car and, not far away, a couple who were obviously interested in the flowers. I walked across to meet them. Immediately they were keen to show me one of their finds -- *Procopiania cretica*, a plant not unlike comfrey but the free end of the corolla tube is split into fine lobes which are recurved. It grows in shade and is confined to some of the Greek islands. We talked and as soon as they heard I came from Norfolk the question came - 'Did you know Eric Swann'? The world of the naturalist is very small. The couple came from Worthing but our mutual contact removed any barriers which might have existed. I asked them if they had found *Ophrys fuciflora*? 'Not yet' was the reply but they said they had seen it four years previously - 2.6 Kilometres beyond the monastery, in the wood on the left hand side of the road going north from Soroni. I made the appropriate note. The next day I proceeded to the location, finding it without too much difficulty. *O. fuciflora* was not in evidence but of the orchids *Orchis italica*, *Orchis papilionacea*, *Ophrys speculum*, *Ophrys tenthredinifera*, *Ophrys scolopax* and *Ophrys lutea* were all blooming. It was a good spot. As I was finishing searching the area I became aware of another person kneeling in the herbage, photographing a specimen of *O. italica*. Naturally I made contact. The man was Portuguese but he had lived in Germany for at least twenty years. We chatted and later he joined my wife and myself for lunch at a taverna a few miles down the road. Here I began to realise how organised the Germans can be.

I asked my new contact if he had found *Orchis provincialis*? Yes, he had, on Profitis Elias. Then, in an attempt to help me pinpoint the site, he asked if I carried an altimeter? I had to say that I did not. Apparently the Germans always have them. However, he managed to instruct me very successfully, without altimeter, and later in the week I found *O. provincialis* together with the man orchid, *Acerus anthropophorum*, and *Neotinea maculata* close by. In our further conversation my friend raised the subject of books. Was I using Davis and Huxley for the orchids? He suggested, very politely, that the book was twenty years out of date and produced the two volumes he was carrying. They were recent German publications and the layout and the illustrations were very impressive. Finally I asked where next he was going? He pulled out a map, far superior to anything which I had been able to find in England, and attached was a computer printout listing all the known sites for orchids in Rhodes and saying what species could be found at each place. Apparently the German orchid society has all the known European orchid sites listed in the computer together with details of the species each site supports. Members travelling abroad can be briefed in a very efficient way. So, my friend was proceeding 0.6 Kilometers eastwards from the taverna to a position, forest dominated by *Pinus halepensis*, where he would find the species detailed on his printout. I went along briefly and certainly I have never seen such a dense population of *Limodorum abortivum*.

Travel extends one's horizons.

Reg Jones.

PROGRAMME

With the start of the excursion season, it seems an appropriate time to write a note on field trips for the benefit of new members, or those who have not joined them before. Unless otherwise stated in the programme, we meet at 11.00 a.m. and are taken round an area until about 1.00 p.m., when we return to our cars for a picnic lunch. Some people may wish to leave then, while others continue for an hour or two in the afternoon. Members can also join the excursion at about 2.00 p.m. if they are unable to come in the morning. Where it is not possible to return to the cars for lunch we indicate in the programme that a portable picnic is required.

It is seldom possible to give a specific topic for an excursion as so much can be found in each habitat. Our "experts" are knowledgeable in many fields and are happy to point out and identify anything they can. Spider hunters are equally welcome on a fungus foray, and most of us, who just have a very general interest, can learn something new on every outing.

June 2nd: Please note that there will be a charge of 50p for parking on the excursion to Mossymere Wood,

NORWICH AREA LOCAL NATURE RESERVES

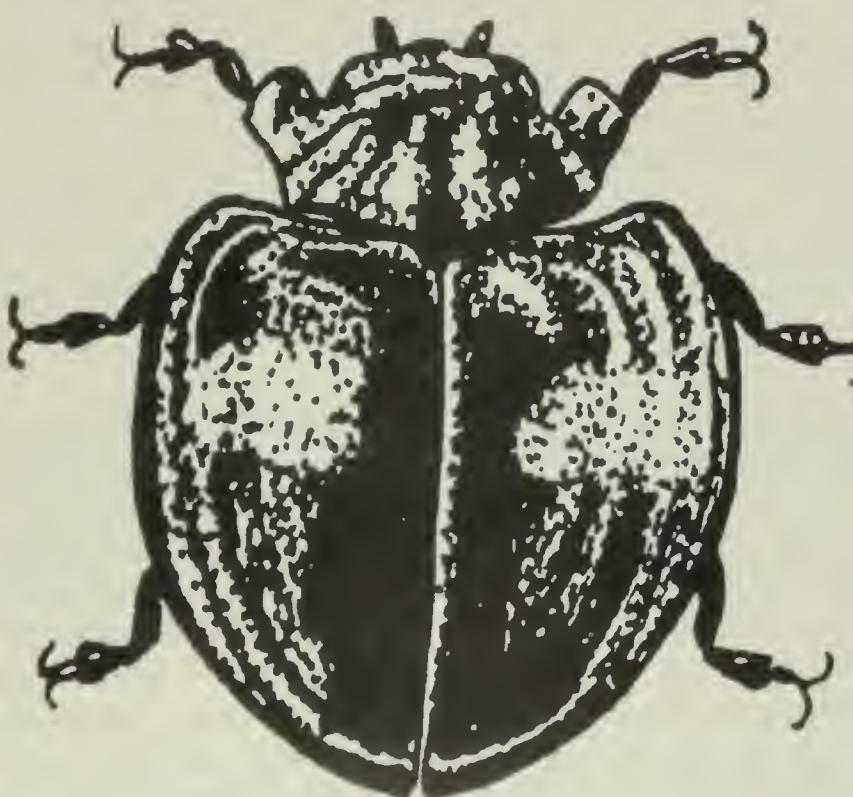
The Society's Research Committee has been asked to organise surveys of a number of Local Nature Reserves in and around the City, and it has proved feasible to include two field meetings in the 91/92 programme (similar to the one last year at Barrow Common) where we hope to bring together a number of members with special interests, especially in the more "obscure" branches of Natural History.

The meetings will be at Marston Marshes on Saturday 20th July and Bowthorpe Marsh on Sunday 1st September. Though any records will add grist to the mill, we are particularly keen to include Arthropods, Molluscs and Worms.

It would be very helpful to know in advance if you are prepared to help with these investigations, either by dropping me a line at 17, High Street, Wells, NR23 1EW, or by phoning me on Fakenham (0328) 710533.

Paul Banham, Chairman, Research Committee.

OVERWINTERING SITE FOR THE KIDNEY-SPOT LADYBIRD



In Britain, all species of ladybird overwinter as adults, each species choosing a characteristic site in which to do so. Majerus & Kearns (1989) list *Chilocorus renipustulatus*, overwintering sites are not known with certainty. On three occasions in the past couple of years I have come across specimens apparently overwintering in exposed situations on the trunks of alder trees at least 4 metres from the ground. In each case, the alders were being felled for conservation purposes (Gresham's School, Holt, 18-9-89; Mannington Estate, Saxthorpe, 23-9-89 and Thurnford Wood, 3-4-91). Dr Majerus tells me that he had assumed that the ladybirds descended the trees (where they feed on coccids) in winter but had never been able to find them.

The Kidney-spot, with its two red blotches on black shield-shaped wing cases, occurs locally in Southern England and seems to be particularly abundant in Norfolk. It is one of twenty species (out of a national total of twenty-four) which have been recorded from the county in the last ten years by the Cambridge Ladybird Survey. Despite this, there are no records for even the commonest species from many 10 Km squares in Norfolk and I would be pleased to put anyone interested in touch with the Survey.

Ref: Majerus M. & Kearns P. (1989) Ladybirds: Naturalists' Handbook 10. Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd.

Tony Leech (Holt 712282)

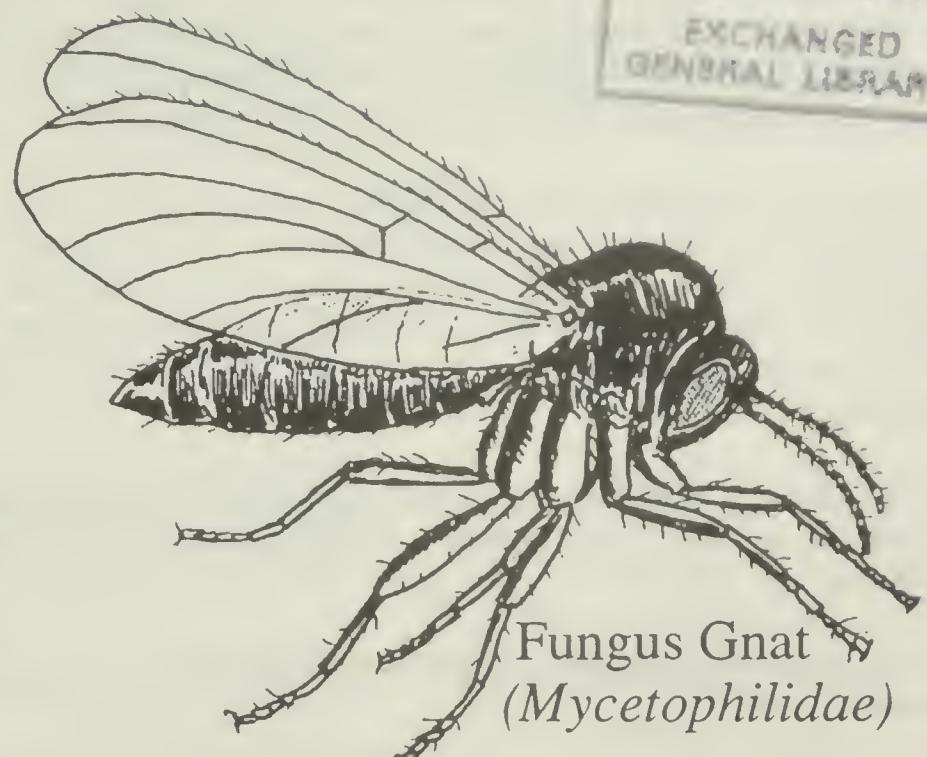
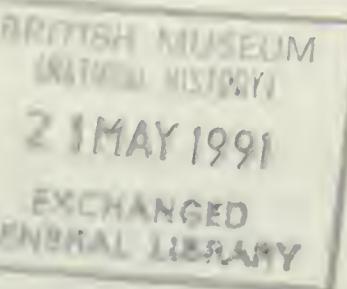
OYSTER FUNGUS (*Pleurotus ostreatus*)

On 28th November 1990 we visited Wayland Wood and found a specimen of the above species hanging from a tree. This was very much decayed and was of interest only in the orange tinge at one end of the cap.

In order to find out the nature of this orange suffusion, this was placed in a container on sterilised peat. Eventually the colour deepened and was identified as the fungus *Hypomyces aurantius*, which is not unusual growing on this and old Polypores.

Observation on this decaying fungus from December to February revealed the presence of two fungus gnat larvae *Mycetophilidae* which seemed to prefer the orange area to the wetter part of the fungus. After a time they pupated away from the fungus and have to be identified on emergence.

What is remarkable is that during the whole of the three months no mould formed on the decaying fungus it is conjectured that the *Hypomyces* was producing some agent which prevented the development of moulds.



Reg Evans.

1891 - A WHALE OF A YEAR !

The lesser Rorqual Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* is among the commonest of the cetaceans which have occurred along our coast. Even so any example of this group found washed up on the shoreline or, even beached, is a scarce thing indeed nowadays. Alive individual would earn much attention from at least the national press, and many prayers for its safe return to the sea.

One hundred years ago such an event caused quite a stir and proved lucrative for several people.

On Monday, 8th June 1891 a 30ft long Lesser Rorqual entered Yarmouth harbour after breaking its upper jaw against the south pier. Several local fisherman, using harpoons, pursued the animal but it was the valiant crew of the Gorleston lifeboat, the "Elizabeth Simpson" who succeeded in capturing the whale and took it, tail first, into the lifeboat shed. Many locals were thus invited to view this poor creature, laying on its side with its lower jaw raised by ropes to keep the huge mouth open.

On the first two days of the "Exhibition" an estimated 2,200 people passed through the turnstile. On the Thursday the whale was dissected by local veterinary surgeon Mr. Shipley, in the company of a large audience which included several leading citizens of the borough and a number of invited naturalists, Thomas Southwell among them. Arthur Patterson gave a lecture on Norfolk Whales and proclaimed to loud cheers that "Gorleston men are not of the right sort to let a prize escape them for want of a plucky try".

The Yarmouth Independent newspaper reported that "The skin was one and a half inches thick, little fat was to be seen... the thick solid flesh... was of a dark hue, similar to the colour of stale beef. As the work progressed barrels of tar were in requisition to kill the disagreeable effluvium, which caused several of the more sensitive to leave the building... A young man, looking too closely into the matter, had his nose accidentally slit by the Veterinary's knife".

Walter Lowne, the Yarmouth taxidermist preserved the whale before it toured the country as an exhibition piece. Arthur Patterson had purchased the creature from the local boatmen and it proved a great success on Yarmouth seafront during the holiday season of the following year.

In September 1892 it was auctioned by J.W. De Caux, of Yarmouth. Mr. Hannant, a hotel proprietor, bought it for £62.

Michael Bean.

SPRING FUNGI

It is not always realised that there are Spring fungi as well as Autumn fungi, although they are not so numerous and some of them occur also in the Autumn. This year has been partially good from reports coming in and we may have some good results this year from the Morel species.

Whilst we were looking after the display in the Assembly House on Saturday 20th April, we were presented with a fine specimen of *Morchella elata*. This morel we had not seen in the 16 years since we returned to Norfolk. As we were recording the Fungus Survey of Warwickshire for some 12 years we observe that there is a report of just one siteing.

Morchella elata is not inconspicuous, being about 150 mm high and about 60 - 80 mm wide. If widespread it would most certainly have come to our notice.

We are grateful to Maureen Loades for adding this new record to our card index.

Reg & Lil Evans.

HERE TODAY

Verpa conica is a fungus belonging to the same group as the morels. This species has a bell shaped light to dark brown cap hanging from the top of a cream coloured stalk. This stalk has horizontal bands of light brown granules. In morchells and mitrophora the caps bear polygonal pits but verpa does not.

It seems to have been seldom recorded in the country and in South-East England only 13 collections up to 1976. In Norfolk there are records in 1873 and 1875 - any later records have not come to my notice.

We were pleased to find several specimens of *Verpa conica* in one site this year (Lilian Evans) and had only seen the species in 1962 in Warwickshire.

In 1977 following the hot dry year of 1976 there were many more records (but not apparently in Norfolk). This spring fungus could well occur elsewhere in Norfolk in damp situations in moss under Hawthorn or Hazel.

Reg & Lil Evans.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

This is to remind members that their subscription was due on the 1st April. Cheques should be made payable to :- Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

Annual Subscription rates are: Ordinary £8.00. Family £10.00.

Please send to:- Honorary Treasurer, Mr. D.A. Dorling, "St. Edmundsbury", 6, New Road, Hethersett, Norwich. NR9 3HH.

WARNING

If your Subscription has lapsed for more than one year and the Hon Treasurer has not received your subscription by the 1st August 1991. Your name will be deleted from the membership roll. Colin Dack, Membership Secretary.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. To arrive not later than 1st July 1991. Contributions sent after this date will not be accepted for the August Natterjack.

In your next Natterjack "**THE ORCHIDS OF SUFFOLK**" book review by Alec Bull. A leaflet (order form) for this excellent book by Martin Sanford, published by the Suffolk Naturalists' Society is enclosed with this Natterjack.



CULEX PIPiens (THE COMMON GNAT)

Last July, I was handed a jar of pond water by a gentleman who is aware of my interests in the goings on in freshwater habitats. The water came from a pond that had stood in a state of decay for some time with a few remaining inches of water gradually evaporating away and being only replenished by the occasional shower.

A first look in the jar, suggested plenty of aquatic life, but a close examination revealed merely the various stages of a species of mosquito known to science as *Culex pipiens* or the common gnat.

Culex pipiens is the commonest of around twenty five species of Culicine mosquitos known in Britain and they may be found breeding in such places as garden water butts or indeed any other receptacle that stands containing water for any length of time.

The eggs are laid in stagnant water in batches of two to three hundred, glued together to form a raft that remains floating on the surface of the water, this raft is unsinkable and no matter what misfortunes befall it, it will always right itself and keep the eggs remaining dry.

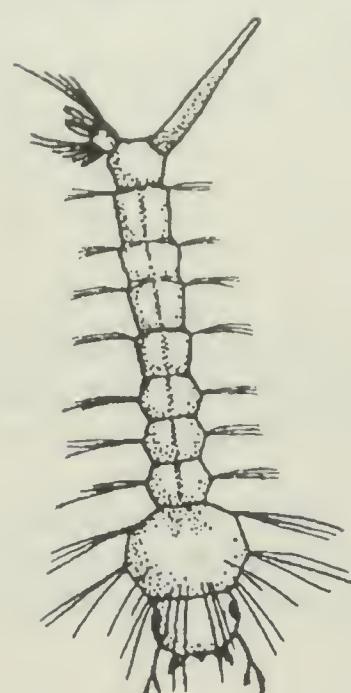


Culex pipiens
Adult Female

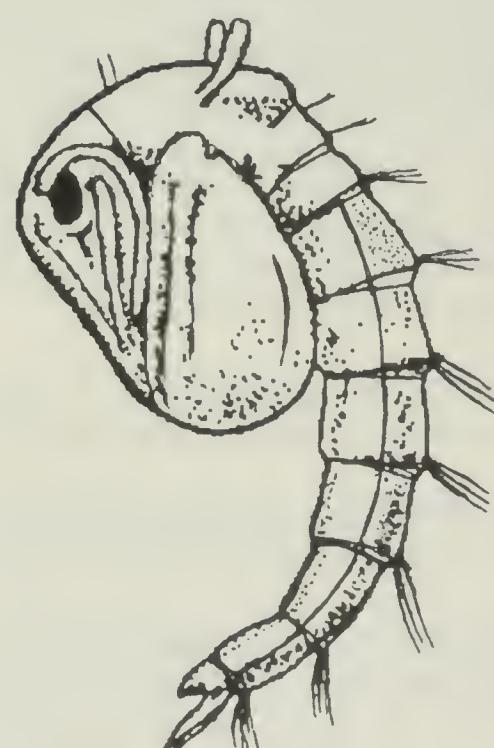
Drawing by Ken Durrant



Egg raft



Larva



Pupa

The larva on hatching, leave the cigar shaped egg by the bottom and makes it's way to the surface and suspends itself from the surface film and takes in air through it's long breathing tube. The larva spends most of it's time on the bottom rising occasionally to the surface to take in air and then wriggles back to the bottom where it makes it's way around, feeding continuously.

It grows fairly quickly, outgrowing it's skeletal skin and moulting three times and after three weeks, it turns into a pupa and assumes a completely different shape.

The creature now looks like a comma, a large head and a tail like structure with a large black dot on it's head, in this state, they do not feed at all but spend most of it's time at the surface, taking in air through a trumpet like structure on the head. They propel themselves by flapping the tail up and down. often in less than a week, the pupal case splits and the imago emerges, the pupal skin floats to the surface

and acts as a platform from which the adult mosquito can make its initial flight after its wings have hardened.

As an adult, they are mainly nocturnal although they can at times be found during daylight hours.

Culex pipiens is rarely responsible for biting humans, usually confining their attentions to biting birds and they do not carry Malaria or Yellow Fever, this dismal responsibility falls to a species known as *Anopheles*, of which we have four species in Britain, all of which are capable of transmitting the disease. With regard to the biting habits of *Culex pipiens*, it is only the females that draw blood.

Tony Brown.

NORWICH FRINGE PROJECT

Two of the excursions in the new programme have been organised in conjunction with the Norwich fringe project; They are on the 14th July at Marston Marshes and 4th August at St. Faith's Common. The meeting will be published in the Projects programme which is widely circulated throughout the Norwich area.

Bob Cronk, - Project officer writes:- "The Project, which in addition to the City, is funded by the Countryside Commission, Norfolk County Council, Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils, and the Broads Authority, has a key philosophy behind it of promoting the improvement and enjoyment of the countryside surrounding Norwich for the benefit of local residents and visitors.

Although (hopefully) many people in Norwich will be aware of the valuable landscapes we have both in and around the City (the Yare and Wensum Valleys, Mousehold Heath, Horsford and Felthorpe Woods), the area as a whole may not automatically be considered at first glance at least, as an informal recreational area or rich in wildlife. People live and work in or near it and drive through it to get to the "real" countryside. In terms of countryside recreation and countryside management, urban fringes are generally under used and under-valued.

Although Norwich is perhaps better off than most cities in that the Council realises the potential of its open spaces, the value of landscapes and areas of nature conservation value and has many excellent examples, the City fringe as a whole (which will include parts of South Norfolk and Broadland Districts and Broads Authority Executive Area) has much potential for new informal recreation and education.

Much is inaccessible because it is private or is beyond reach of those without transport, or not suitable for the less able. The Project will hopefully be able to improve this situation.

Many excellent examples do already exist- the M & GN Railway Path/Marriots Way, the Riverside and Yare Valley Walks, but perhaps these suffer in that they have none or few links or circular routes between or radiating from them.

Although a key aim of the Project is the improvement of informal recreation, the areas of landscape and nature conservation management will not be forgotten. Again, many fine examples exist but the development of a green corridors, the management of riverside fens and meadows will hopefully come into the scope of the Project.

Encompassing all of the work is the involvement of local people. Education through participation will be a priority. But the Project will hopefully have a wider remit here in its enabling role. In these times of growing environmental awareness people quite often want to improve their local community open space, village pond, etc., but do not know what to do or where to ask to find out.

I hope the Project will be able to support and where necessary guide this community action."

Both excursions are, of course, open to all members. We will particularly welcome volunteers to assist the leaders should the numbers of visitors exceed our expectations.

Members wishing to help in recording the area should note that the Research Committee have organised a meeting on the following Saturday (20th July).

M. Ewles, Chairman Programme Committee.

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Number 34

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

PROGRAMME CHANGE

The Excursion to Whin Common has been changed from Sunday 13th October 1991 to Saturday 19th October 1991.

HEGGATT HALL Sunday 26th May 1991

As a visit was made here as recently as last August, it was to be expected that not many new records would be made. However, a few Sedges were new to the flower list, as these would have been gone over as late as August. Hoary Cinquefoil *Potentilla argentea* was new, and also features in the list of 'scarce' species currently being studied by the B.S.B.I. The alien 'Ripgut Grass' *Bromus rigidus* was also found by one track way. Our lunch stop near a piece of Fen, revealed singing Sedge, Reed and Grasshopper Warblers, but the "Bird of the day" was undoubtedly the lovely male Pied Flycatcher, in full song from an old beech tree as we reentered the park.

Alec Bull.

MOSSYMER 2nd June 1991

Not the best of days for a Naturalist's ramble, certainly not complying with the old adage of flaming June, but at least the rain came late in the afternoon when most of us had returned to our cars.

While our Chairperson, Anne, was describing the origin of the name Mossymere as being a mossy place at the boundary of three parishes, and not a mere like a small lake, a cuckoo flew overhead and we started off on our first ramble.

On the side of a path, the surface of which was covered with Thyme-leaved Speedwell, a yellow banded Sawfly *Strongylogaster lineata* was depositing its eggs in the coiled up frond of Bracken. Brown Silver-lined moths, whose caterpillars also feed upon bracken, were also in evidence. Chiff chaffs were calling as we made our way past numerous Bird Cherry, most of them were just past their best but one or two still exhibited showers of white blossom as if to defy the weather. One tree we found had a number of immature fruits which had been galled by the fungus *Taphrina pruni* which causes them to become elongated, cream coloured and mis-shapen.

Everywhere we went we found literally hundreds of small shining bronze green moths, *Adela reamurella* at rest on the herbage. The males possess extremely long antennae and are usually very active when the sun is shining, but the vast majority that we saw were females. Their caterpillars feed upon the leaf litter under the trees. Another small brown moth *Esperia sulphurella* with a golden streak and triangular spot on the forewing, was frequently found. Their caterpillars feed in dead wood.

We noticed that many of the mature trees had died or were dying, and wondered if this denoted a drastic lowering of the water table. Areas which years ago had contained large



BIRD CHERRY
Normal fruit and
Galled fruit

ponds were now large dry depressions in the wood, covered with Meadow-sweet. Some of the conifers had also died. One group we came upon were decorated with hundreds of psuedo-cones, the galls caused by the aphid *Adelges abietis*.

Yellow Pimpernel, Wood Sanicle and Crosswort were encountered along the paths, the Red Campion especially exhibiting quite a variation in colour. We came upon a Long-tailed Tits nest which had apparently contained young birds. It was laying on the path near the bush from where it had been extracted and ravaged, possibly by Magpies. It had been lined entirely with pheasants feathers.

A bonus for us turned out to be ten Crossbills calling from the top of a high tree. They totally ignored us as binoculars were handed around to let everyone get a better view.

Crane flies were represented here by the prettily marked *Nephrotoma quadrifaria* and the much smaller *Limonia flavipes*. Early Purple Orchids were still in flower, but the Common Spotted Orchids were only conspicuous by their spotted leaves the flower spikes not showing. A number of small black and white spiders *Linyphia peltata* were on the leaves of the bushes no doubt taking advantage of the many small flies sheltering there.

After lunch we proceeded towards the river Bure and a more marshy type of habitat. Herons were seen on the wing. Our prettiest froghopper, the black and red *Cercopsis vulnerata*, were to be found on the reeds and sedges. The Buttercups were infested with beautiful minute shining coppery micro moths, *Micropterix calthella*, who belong to a unique small family of primitive moths exhibiting many features similar to Caddis flies. They possess functional mandibles and no proboscis so they are capable of feeding on pollen.

Egg clusters of Alder flies, *Sialis lutaria*, were to be found on the leaves of the reeds. Many White-lipped Hedge snails, *Cepaea hortensis*, were in the same area, the clear yellow forms being more numerous than the banded ones.

On the way back we came around the edge of the wood on a field that had been planted with a variety of grass and put over to set-aside. The leaves of the bushes and trees at the edge of the wood were shining with the sticky secretions of the Aphids from the Sycamore trees overhead. Many sawflies, *Tenthredo livida*, *Tenthredopsis litterata* and *T. nassata* also *Dolerus liogaster* were to be seen imbibing this manna from above. Hover flies and various beetles were also enjoying this feast, the most conspicuous being the Cardinal beetle *Pyrochroa serraticornis* of clear red colouration. Many of the Sycamore leaves were covered with the small pimple galls of the mite *Eriophyes macrorhynchus aceribus*. One Rawan tree had many of its leaves variegated with yellow spots caused by the galls of another mite, *Eriophyes pyri*.

As soon as we reach the lane we came upon twenty two Pheasant egg shells dispersed about six feet apart along the lane, each one showing signs of having its contents eaten by either Magpies or Crows, these must have represented the entire contents of at least two nests. On reaching our cars the weather forecast proved right for once, the long awaited rain came, ending an enjoyable day in which only one butterfly had been seen, a male Wall Brown.

Ken Durrant.

EXCURSION TO ROYDON GREEN TO STUDY GRASSES

Saturday 22nd June 1991

About 15 members assembled at Brewers Green on a rather overcast but dry day. Arthur Copping started the proceeding by handing round specimens of *Bromus diandrus* collected from the headland of a nearby barley field and explained the structure of a typical grass inflorescence with reference to them.

For the next two hours the party explored the unmown areas of the green, finding over 20 species. The most noteworthy were *Avenula pubescens*, rather local in Norfolk, and both subspecies of *Phleum pratense*.

A short visit was made to Arthur's home where he maintains some rarer species in cultivation including *Festuca longifolia*, *F. brevipila* (Tracey), *F. juncifolia*, *Puccinellia rupestris*, *Poa chaixii*, *Bromus hordeaceus* subsp. *Thominii*, *B. secalinus*, *B. arvensis*, *Avena sterilis* sulsp. *Ludoviciana* and *Leersia oryzoides*.

For the afternoon the party moved on to Worthan Ling, an area of acid heathland containing isolated pockets of base rich soils, just across the Suffolk border. Here *Avenula pubescens* was found again, but growing in company with *A. pratensis*. Nearby grew *Lolium perenne*, *Festuca pratensis* and the sterile intergeneric hybrid between them, *X Festulium loliaceum*. By contrast the acidic areas contained *Festuca tenuifolia*, *Aira praecox*, *Agrostis vinealis*, *Nardus stricta* and *Danthonia decumbens*.

At the conclusion of the main meeting a few members visited specific sites in Diss and Roydon to see some rare specialities. The recently discovered colony of *Poa bulbosa* on Fair Green, Diss consisted of completely withered plants but the small bulbs were easily seen. In Hall Lane, Roydon, the bank supporting *Festuca heterophylla* had just been closely mown, but a few flowing

plants had survived near the hedge bottom. A similar fate had befallen most of the *Bromus willdenowii* which has persisted for several years in Hose Avenue. The meeting ended on the High Road, Roydon, where one plant of *Agrostis castellana* was beginning to flower at the junction of the wall and pavement.

Arthur Copping.

(with the exception of *Festuca brevipila*, the nomenclature follows that used in *Flora of the British Isles* (Third Edition) by Clapham, Tutin and Moore. (Cambridge University Press) 1981).

ADDENDUM (Species list)

BREWERS GREEN (Morning)

- Agrostis capillaris*
- Alopecurus geniculatus*
- A. pratensis*
- Anthoxanthum odoratum*
- Arrhenatherum elatius*
- Avenula pubescens*
- Bromus hordeaceus* subsp. *hordeaceus*
- Bromus sterilis*
- Cynosurus cristatus*
- Dayctylis glomerata*
- Deschampsia cespitosa* subsp. *cespitos*a
- Festuca arundinacea*
- Festuca rubra* subsp. *rubra*
- Glyceria fluitans*
- Holcus lanatus*
- Lolium perenne*
- Phleum pratense* subsp. *bertolonii*
- P. praten* subsp. *pratense*
- Poa angustifolia*
- Poa pratensis*
- Poa trivialis*

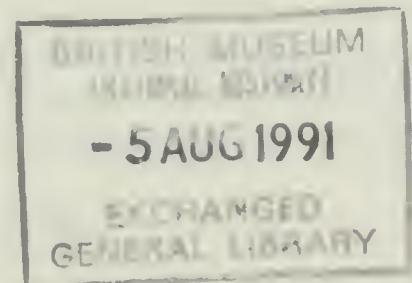
WORTHAM LING (Afternoon) (Additions to morning list only)

- Agrostis vinealis*
- Aira caryophyllea* subsp. *caryophyllea*
- A. praecox*
- Avenula pratensis*
- Briza media*
- Bromus diandrus*
- B. xpseudothominii*
- Danthonia decumbens*
- Festuca pratensis*
- F. tenuifolia*
- X festulolium loliaceum*
- Hordeum murinum*
- Koeleria macrantha*
- Nardus stricta*
- Poa annua*
- Vulpia bromoides*

Specialities visited at conclusion of the main meeting

- Agrostis castellana* (High Road, Roydon)
- Bromus willdenowii* (Hose Avenue, Roydon)
- Festuca heterophylla* (Hall Lane, Roydon)
- Poa bulbosa* (Fair Green, Diss)

(Total number of taxa noted 42)



BOOK REVIEW
THE ORCHIDS OF SUFFOLK
By Martin Sanford.

Start talking about Orchids, and even the ears of the layman become pricked, especially since colour television brought home to him that there are beautiful and interesting species to be found in his own countryside. On the debit side come the seemingly never ending statistics of what we have lost during the present century. Unfortunately, this is hard fact, and it was to set out in simple terms the full scale of loss both of habitat, and of species of Orchid that have disappeared from the Suffolk countryside that Martin Sanford embarked on the study that resulted in this book.

As a first step, a three year survey started in 1985 to discover or rediscover as many Orchid sites as possible. A map of the county showing "All records" by tetrad, reveals that only 55 tetrads out of a possible 800 or so, can now boast seven species of Orchid, a figure which I could almost have equalled in a single four acre meadow just over 40 years ago. Reading this book sent me off on a round trip of some of the Suffolk sites I used to know. Not the ones I knew had been ploughed up, but places like Primrose Wood at Hitcham, where I used to find Greater Butterfly Orchids by the dozen, and occasionally Fly Orchid as well. This peculiarly shaped piece of ancient woodland, surely a fragment of something bigger, looked and felt much as it ever did. No more gloomy than I remember it. Still Spurge Laurel everywhere. Rather a lot of Cleavers this year. This may be due to a Rookery overhead which didn't used to be there. Not a trace of either Butterfly or Fly Orchids at all. Just a nice colony of 46 spikes of rapidly going over Early Purples. Is the reason for their decline also partly climatic I wonder? Martin Sanford points to the cessation of coppicing as contributing to the decline of the Butterfly Orchid, but Primrose Wood was never coppiced in my memory. Being nowhere more than 70 or 80 yards wide, sufficient light always penetrated from the edge. The Fly Orchid is a different story altogether-and a fascinating one. It is a poor seeder, and in addition, needs to be mated by the male of a Solitary Wasp of either the *Gorytes* or *Argogorytes* genera, to effect pollination. If agricultural insecticides have wiped out the wasp in a Fly Orchid area, then the Orchids must die out as well.

Interesting little snippets of information like this are given under each species, as well as a full description of the plant from the ground upwards, and illustrated by an excellent photograph of each species still extant in the county. All are mapped, including

those which have long since disappeared, like the Early Spider Orchid, last recorded in 1793! I suppose we must be resigned to the fact that none are ever likely to reappear, except possibly the Fen Orchid, last seen at Thelnetham in 1974. But I am a bit "green" to realise that I only missed Burnt Orchid at Risby Black Ditches by 9 years! Having dealt with the 32 species of Orchid known to have occurred in Suffolk, Mr. Sanford devotes the last seven pages of his text to known hybrids, though it should be said that here, as elsewhere, he only accepts those records that he is sure of. If a record is dubious, he says so, even though it had been originally accepted by Francis Simpson himself.

In the chapters preceding the catalogue of species, the ecology of Suffolk Orchids is dealt with, Orchid habitats, the soil regions of the county, and a chapter by Francis Simpson on 'Half a century of change'. There is also a foreword by Edgar Milne-Redhead, a lifelong Orchid lover, and friend of V.S. Summerhayes, who wrote the New Naturalist book, 'Wild Orchids of Britain'. The Bibliography at the end is comprehensive and there is a page of "Useful addresses and publications".

Printed on glossy paper, the book has a nice feel, and both the author and the publishers, the Suffolk Naturalists' Society are to be congratulated on producing an attractive historical record of the Orchids of the county which will also double as an identification book of those likely to be found in East Anglia, and even further afield. At £12, it should not be difficult to find a place for it on anybody's book shelf.

Alec Bull.

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP PROGRAMME 1991/92

Monday 23rd September	"Nature Photography in the Valais" (Bob Illingworth).
Monday 14 th October	" The English Lake District" (Mike Poulton).
Monday 11th November	"Naturalist at Large" (Don Dorling).
Monday 9th December 1992	"The Caribbean Islands" (John Oxenford).
Monday 13th January	"A Garden is a lovesome thing, God Wot." (Alec Bull).
Monday 3rd February	"Natural History Slide Sequences" (Malcolm Eke).
Monday 23rd March	"Slides from Recent Travels" (Paul Banham).
Monday 6th April	"A Photographers World" (Richard Tilbrook).

To Commence at 7.30 pm. (19.30 hrs.), all of the above meetings are being held in the Sir Edmund Bacon Room, at the Assembly House.

BRITISH PLANT GALL SOCIETY WEEK-END 7TH & 8TH SEPTEMBER.

Outside venues are being arranged for the morning and afternoon of 7th Sept. and the morning of 8th Sept. Please contact Rex Hancy (Norwich 860042) for details.

SOCIAL EVENING - 9TH NOVEMBER

Some changes to the evening's programme this time! Food, yes, but we are going back to the simpler fare of some years ago, cheese and wine.

That will be sandwiched between (sorry!) two contrasting entertainments. First, the traditional slide shows and commentaries. Please bring no more than 9. After: inhibitions have been blown away by good company and possible the wine, we will form a literary circle and entertain each other with short extracts from favourite books, poems, stories, all on a natural history theme.

Please contact us before the event with details of the contributions so we can plan the programme.

Tickets at £3 each on sale from September onwards.

Rex and Barbara Hancy Norwich 860042

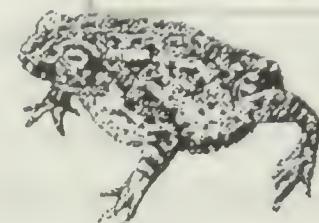
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. To arrive not latter than 1st October 1991. Contributions sent after this date will not be accepted for the November Natterjack.

S.296.A



Number 35

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



November 1991

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

SYDNEY LONG MEMORIAL MEDAL

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. Ken Durrant who was presented with the SYDNEY LONG MEDAL at the Annual General Meeting of the Norfolk Naturalists Trust earlier this year.

Many members are aware of his dedication to the study of natural history, especially in the field of ENTOMOLOGY. Also of his interest and work on Beeston Common and the enthusiastic way in which he conveys his knowledge to other people.

Anne Brewster.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Professor Hubert Lamb would like to enlarge on the title for his Presidential address to be given on Wednesday 11 March 1992. His talk will be on "Our climate and the Norfolk scene: Some persistent influences but ever-unfolding changes".

FIELD MEETINGS

1991

Sunday 1st December
11.00hrs

HOLKHAM FOR WINTER MIGRANTS
Meet Lady Ann's Road TF890448
Leader: Colin Dack

1992

Sunday 26th January
10.30Hrs*

WEYBOURNE
Meet Weybourne Beach Car park TG 111437
Leader: Mike Poulton

Sunday 9th February
10.30hrs*

HOLKHAM
Meet Lady Ann's Road TF890448
Leader: Michael Seago

Sunday 1st March
10.30HRS*

BURNHAM OVERY STAITE
Meet Burnham Overy Staite Beach Car Park TF 843443
Leader: David Paull
**Please note earlier starting times.*

BIRTHWORT

It is good to see that rare Birthwort *Aristolochia clematitis* is alive and well and thriving in Norwich.

Carrow Priory ruins are set within the factory and office complex of Colman's, and are all that remain of the Benedictine nunnery which was founded during the reign of the Norman King Stephen (1135-1154). *A. clematitis* grows as a weed among the ruins and is considered to be a relic of the nuns' physic garden. Formerly used by midwives as an anodyne, it is a hairless, foetid perennial, 1-2 feet high, with heart-shaped leaves and with small clusters of long, tubular, pale yellow flowers.

Among the interesting trees and shrubs growing in the Colman complex, planted by Prof. James Stuart at the turn of the century, are a weeping beech and a cut-leaved beech.

The whole complex is worth a botanical survey, dependent upon permission from, or collaboration with, Colman's to do this.

Phyll Hardie.

FISH LICE *Argulus foliaceus*

I recently noticed that one of the larger shubunkins in my garden pond, was showing signs of localised red patches on the side of the body as though blood were beneath the skin from some internal injury. The behaviour of the fish itself was normal and showing no signs of stress or disease and it was feeding well among the other fish in the pond. Whilst looking at the fish as it rose to the surface, as they do when we are about to feed them. My wife noticed something that appeared to be sticking to its side, so I netted and bowled the fish for further examination and found the appendage to be a fish louse *Argulus foliaceus* firmly stuck to its side and under a hand lens, I could actually see it taking blood from its host. The fact that it continued extracting blood even when out of the water, interested me. To call these creatures lice, is very misleading. They are in fact crustaceans and not lice, which are in fact insects. They attach themselves to their hosts by means of huge suckers and when using tweezers to remove them, it is most surprising just how firmly they stick to the fish. These suckers and their extremely flat bodies, mean that, no matter how fast the fish moves through the water, the creature remains firmly attached.

Towards the end of the summer, the females lay their eggs in batches of one to two hundred in a jelly like mass on almost anything that will support them. They take about four to five weeks to hatch and the larvae will attach themselves to fish almost immediately, moulting a number of times before they reach adulthood. These creatures are more common than is generally supposed, especially in the wild. At times, quite a number may be attached to one fish and will eventually cause the death of the unfortunate host, when they will simply detach themselves from the dead fish and swim around until they find another unfortunate victim. They have been found on several species of fish, carp, pike, bream, sticklebacks, minnows, dace, trout, perch and tench and now it seems, my shubunkins. Obviously in the confines of a garden pond, it is not difficult to imagine the damage that can occur if this parasite is not eradicated, especially when found among expensive ornamental fish.

I would be most interested to know if other pond owners (naturalists) have experienced problems with this troublesome pest.

Tony Brown.

Any letters concerning the above to Tony Brown, 16 Mariners Park Close, Hopton, Gt. Yarmouth. NR31 9DQ.

“LONG-LOST” SPECIES

The Research Committee, meeting in October, discussed the question of some long-lost species, both plant and animal, which have subsequently been re-discovered in Norfolk. For example, the late Ted Ellis was delighted when Richard Harmer, of Stibbard, showed him a thriving colony of Dutch Rush *Equisetum hyemale* in a hedgerow; until then it was believed to be extinct in Norfolk. I myself was (wrongly, I quickly confessed) incredulous when I was told that the “Edible” Frog, introduced in the mid 19th Century to various sites, and, it was believed, subsequently lost, was still living at Thompson Common in the late 1950’s (it is, in fact, now classified as the Pool Frog *Rana lessonae*, which is very similar to the Edible Frog *R. esculenta*).

What else may still be lurking in some corner of the County awaiting the right person at the right time, we wondered? Could Dick Bagnall-Oakeley have been right when he insisted, I suppose some 30 years ago, that the Palmate Newt *Triturus helveticus* was to be found in a pond near Holt? The male is easily distinguished from the Smooth Newt *T. vulgaris* by its dark, webbed hind feet, and tail ending in a filament. Edward Cross is living in hopes that the weird and wonderful “Colander” Earth Star *Myriostoma coliformis* (see Roger Phillip’s **Mushrooms**, p. 252) is still present in his neck-of-the-woods for some determined Mycologist to locate. It was last seen at Hillington in 1880.

It is a fact well-known to compiler of reports that distribution-maps as often as not show the distribution of observers rather than the species in question, which leads David Richmond to surmise that Roesel’s Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* could well be producing its high-pitched stridulation in Norfolk saltmarshes (see Michael Chinnery’s **Insects**, pp 52/53), since it has been recorded from Benacre, Suffolk and the Humber. I am sure that many other examples could be produced. So, here’s a chance to make your mark and get yourself into the annals!

Paul Banham, Chairman, Research Committee.

A NEW BOOK - SOME NORFOLK GALLS

There is a need for a book on galls for beginners, and for those wishing to enlarge their knowledge of the subject. The study of Norfolk galls has been made over the last decade, and over 100 species are listed in the book. Each species is accompanied by a line drawing and some - diagrams of the life history.

The parasites and inquilines (lodgers) have also been mentioned. Distribution of the species has been confined to stating some of the sites in which they have been found. It is not possible to insert frequency since much of Norfolk has yet to be explored.

This book will be useful in other counties since most of the galls are present elsewhere. It is available for £4 (+ 50p. Postage) from Mrs. Lilian Evans, Chanterelle, Church Road, Welborne, E. Dereham. Norfolk. NR20 3LH.



COTTON WOOL GALL

FUNGUS FORAY - BRIDGHAM PICNIC SITE

Sunday 22nd September

The dry season this year had made the prospect of a large number of records unlikely - and so it proved to

be. Perhaps if a day had been chosen some weeks later the situation might have been very different now that we have rain at last.

Usually the number of fungi species varies from 50-150 in the site in late September, probably many members thought the drought would have made fungi hunting a wasted effort. In fact only 8 Society members arrived (apart from us) when we have known a total of 50-60 at this meeting. We were joined by British Mycological Society members two from Oxford (on holiday) and two from Welney.

The total number of fungi species was 23 but we also recorded a large spider (*Araneus marmoreus vat pyramidata*) on oak leaves. Buff Tip and Festoon moth caterpillars, mostly on oak, but on Sycamore. The moth is stated to be uncommon.

Reg Evans.

MEDITERRANEAN ORCHIDS

The May issue of Natterjack included a note about plant hunting in Rhodes and a comment on how well a contact from Germany had been briefed on the distribution of the orchids. A recently published book - Field Guide to the Orchids of Britain and Europe by Buttler - refers to the work which has been done in recent time, notably in Germany, on the distribution of European orchids and to the mapping scheme, including the Mediterranean area, being carried out by a group known as OPTIMA. Elsewhere, in the bibliography, there is an indication that information is available from Otto Feldweg, Schonbergstr. I, D-7400 Tubingen, Germany.

As I hope to go to northern Cyprus next spring, I wrote to Herr Feldweg, in English, asking if he could supply any information about the orchid flora of Cyprus and also details of distribution. Almost by return of post he sent me a publication which included a long paper about Cyprus. The orchid species are listed, there are descriptions of the sites where orchids are found and distribution maps. The detail is impressive. Around 400 sites are described. Let me give one example:

Map ref.

WEI3II Lapithos to Vasilia Road. 200m West of moslem cemetery. *Phrygana*. *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. *Ophrys flavomarginata*. *Ophrys fusca*. *Ophrys iricolor*. *Ophrys kotschy*. *Ophrys lapethica*. *Ophrys lutea s. sp galilaea*. *Ophrys transhyrcana*. *Ophrys umbilicata*. *Orchis italica*. *Orchis syriaca*.

The paper is, of course, in German but it is quite straightforward and, with the aid of a dictionary, the essential details soon become apparent.

If any member intends visiting a part of the Mediterranean such as Crete or Rhodes and is looking for flowers, I suggest a note to Herr Feldweg might be advantageous. Incidentally, the publication was not expensive - 15DM plus 2DM postage - about £6.

Reg Jones.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS?

When thinking about Christmas presents for your naturalist friends why not consider:-

Birds of Great Yarmouth	£7-50 + 50p post
1990 Bird & Mammal Report	£3-50 + 50p post
Norfolk Bird Atlas	£1-50 + 50p post
Bird & Mammal Reports - bargain pack of five colour issues	£10 + £1 post
1991 Transactions - (galls etc in colour)	£4 + 50p post

Available from Mrs. Mary Dorling, 6 New Road, Hethersett, Norwich. NR9 3HH

BEESTON REGIS COMMON, SHERINGHAM

As there has been no organised walk round Beeston Regis Common during 1991, we thought you might like to know what we have been doing since the last visit by the Society.

The early part of this year was spent in clearing some of the gorse from the main bog area. What seemed to be a thankless task was rewarded in the summer by a profusion of flora, including bee and lesser butterfly orchids which appeared in this area after an absence of a few years. The lesser butterfly orchids proved a major attraction for several photographers - some of them were even lucky enough to find them!

A large area has now been cleared to the N. E. corner of the site which was previously overgrown with ash, gorse, birch, etc. A considerable effort was made to achieve this clearance by a small band of volunteers. However our efforts were rewarded by a good showing of flora, not to mention a pair of tawny owls who have taken up residence.

Many members who have not visited the common in the last few years will remember it as being overgrown with bracken. Where previously access was limited to narrow pathways by bracken of up to 8ft high, we have now brought it under control on most of the more interesting parts of the common making access easy to all areas.

Many of the areas freed of bracken have produced a profusion of ground flora including, in one area, over twenty pyramidal orchids. On the heath similarly cleared, we have been pleased to see the start of the regeneration of the ling and bellheather that once covered these areas. With the regeneration of the flora, we have also seen an increase in the insect life including at least 24 species of butterfly, all in large numbers. A recent moth survey found around 150 different species on one area of the common in just the four hours from 10pm - 2am.

The main pond was cleared in October 1990 using a JCB. This revealed such treasures as 22ft long scaffold poles, prams, bikes and various other items, including antique bottles! We were surprised at how quickly the pond returned to its former glory with a profusion of aquatic life, damsel and dragon flies. The flowering rush put on a display worthy of any flower show!

Much of the western side of the main bog has been taken over by extensive stands of gorse. We have just started this winters project to remove as much of this gorse as possible. This will double the size of the bog area. However, our main problem is not the gorse but rather a lack of willing bodies. As the old saying goes 'many hands make light work' but getting the extra hands is proving a problem. At present, our Sunday morning work parties number only 4 or 5 at best (usually only 2!) whereas 6-8 would make the task much easier. If any of you could give us a hand, we would be very pleased to see you. We usually work on Sunday mornings from 9 - 1 from October through to April. (You need only provide the hands - we have the tools!). If you can help, pleas phone either Ken Durrant on Sheringham 823666 or us on Sheringham 824499. Although gorse clearance is hard work, the rewards are great. On a area cleared of gorse at the Northern end of the site where previously only a handful of orchids bloomed, at the last count we had over 2000!

We would have liked to have attended more of the Societys meetings and excursions this year but, owing to the pressures of looking after the site, we felt that the Common should be our main priority as regards our time. We hope to be able to join you more in the future!

David Mower and Janet Holyoak.

SPANGLE GALLS

There has been a great scarcity of spangle galls throughout the county this autumn. These small galls on the underside of the oak leaves are usually to be found in their thousands in normal years, there are records of over 300 being found on one leaf.

I have only found four sites this year for the Common Spangle gall caused by the wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*, that is one leaf with three or four galls on it at four separate sites. Two sites only for the Smooth Spangle *N. albipes*, and only one for Silk Button *N. numismatis*.

Last year numbers of these galls were not what they had been in previous years, but the sudden drop in numbers this year means that something drastic has happened, possibly the wet and cold weather experienced at the critical time in spring, when the agamic females should have emerged from the fallen galls of the previous year which had overwintered in the undergrowth, and should have started the alternate generation on the catkins etc. These galls were almost nonexistent this year as well.

There does not appear to have been a decline in any other of our galls, in fact the Oak Apple seems to have been abundant everywhere this summer.

Two galls were unfortunately omitted from my list published in the Transactions this year, and should have appeared under the heading

DIPTERA Cecidomyiidae
Brachyeurina peniophore
Mycocecis ovalis

Host
Fungi *Peniophora cinerea*.
Fungi *Hypoxyylon rubiginosum*

Ken Durrant

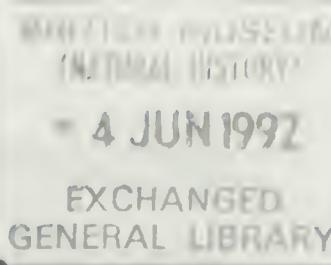
STARLING EGGS

About two or three years ago I was puzzled by the presence of complete, undamaged and apparently perfect blue eggs of starlings lying on the grass. I made a few enquiries among members of the society but no one had an answer except one I had considered myself - that the female bird had started to lay an egg while away from the nest, and unable to stop had laid it wherever it could. At that time we had several starlings nesting under the pantiles and I wondered if it might be a bird pirating a nest site and ousting the eggs already there. Four or five eggs appeared during the season, almost all in perfect condition. This happened for two more years and then ceased. This may well be because our house, the one next door and one or two others in the area had been birdproofed. Now, reading the Newsletter of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society "White Admiral" No 19, I seem to have the answer and other members may be interested. It seems that some starlings have been imitating cuckoos, laying eggs in another starling's nest and removing a similar number of eggs belonging to the owner. But why are these usually laid on the grass, a few on fresh dug earth but none on hard paths? It seems we have a lot to learn about the behaviour of even our commonest birds and animals. Seeing them at food put out for birds, the starlings are noisy, active birds and usually blamed for being "quarrelsome". May I suggest a simpler answer? The more common way of group feeding among starlings is stretched in a line and advancing across a field each bird just out of pecking reach of the neighbours. This ensures that any insect disturbed and missed by one bird will be caught by another bird in the line and is an effective way of making the most of a feeding ground. If there is a strong instinct to keep other birds in the line a beak's distance away while feeding naturally, when the bird finds an unnaturally large store of food, it is faced with conflicting instincts - to eat as much as possible and at the same time to keep its neighbour a beak thrust away, and it reacts by an unnatural reaction. In fact it is often counterproductive, for sometimes while two starlings "argue" over a piece of fat or bread, a sparrow darts in, grabs it and is away. It is not unusual for many animals to show unnatural behaviour when faced with an abnormal amount of food.

The Editor of "White Admiral" suggests that anyone interested in this handsome bird could read "The Starling" by Chris Feare 1984 O.U.P. Sorry, no price given, Shire Publications also have a cheap booklet in their series. "The Starling", paperback, at £1.95.

Philip Cambrigde.

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Number 36

February 1992

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Society will be held at 19.30 hours on Wednesday 22nd April 1992 in the City Library Lecture Theatre, Norwich

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting. (27th March 1991)
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Presentation of Chairman's Report.
5. Presentation of Treasurer Report and the Income and Expenditure Account for 1991.
6. Presentation of the Council nomination for the President of the Society for 1992-93.
Dr. A. G. Irwin.
7. Presentation of Officers and Council.
Council offers the following nominations, all nominees having consented to serve.
Vice-President. (As Vice-Presidents are elected for life, only new nominations are subject to election.)

Chairman
General Secretary
Assistant Secretary
Treasurer
Assistant Treasurer
Chairman, Membership Committee
Secretary, Membership Committee
Chairman, Programme Committee
Secretary, Programme Committee
Chairman, Publications Committee
Secretary, Publications Committee
Chairman, Research Committee
Secretary, Research Committee
Honorary Auditor
Elected Council Members to serve for three years,
(Retiring 1995)
Elected Council Member to Serve for two years
(Replacing D. Richmond nominated for Treasurer).

D. A. Dorling
Dr. A. Leech
Mrs. J. Negal
D. Richmond
M. J. Woolner
R. Hancy
C. R. Dack
M. J. C. Ewles
Mrs. C. W. Haines
R. Jones
R. E. (Dick) Jones
P. R. Banham
E. Cross
J. E. Timbers
Mrs. G. Dickey F. Farrow
M. Poulton P. J. Wanstall
P. Lambley (Retiring 1994)

Any other nominations may be received from members for any of the above posts other than Vice-presidents, duly proposed and seconded and with the nominees written consent, not less than seven clear days before the A.G.M. to (Gen. Sec)

8. Any other business.

Following the A.G.M., A Slide presentations with commentaries by Brian Webster: "The Folklore of the Countryside" and "Butterflies and Moths".

ORTHOPTERA AT LITCHAM COMMON

In the gloriously hot sun of early July, I stepped out of the shady woodland at Litcham Common onto the acres of tussocky grassland to be greeted by a cacophony of grasshopper song. Not the shrill, high pitched warbling of continental species, but the soft whispering of Common Green Grasshopper, so intense from the sheer numbers present that the individual stridulations merged into a continuous, shuffling song.

In a muddy hollow, my joy was compounded by the discovery of Common and Slender Groundhoppers *Tetrix undulata* and *T. subulata*, new for this 10km square but linking neatly with similar records from Narford, lower down the same river valley, and reminding me yet again how all our remnant, discrete habitats must at some time been linked into continuous distributions of species.

There are the joys of discovery which make grasshoppers so fascinating to me. In no other field of study of our larger insects does so much remain to be discovered about the distribution of species, and because they are sedentary, each new discovery is a glimpse into the past, and a reflection of what our landscape must have looked like centuries ago.

In the current edition of the Transactions you will have found a review of the present state of knowledge of grasshopper distribution. This is not intended to be the last word on the subject but merely the first, a starting point from which you can go out to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of the habitats within the county. Please continue to send orthoptera records to me at the address below, especially if you have records for new tetrads or 10km squares relative to the published maps. Records of bush-cricket are particularly required as the published maps show these to be substantially under recorded throughout the county.

D.I. Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk. NR10 4LS.

BIRD WATCHING VISIT TO HOLKHAM

Twelve or so Members met at Lady Anne's Drive at Holkham on Sunday 1st December for a bird watching walk through the pines and across the beach at this North Norfolk National Nature Reserve. The weather was overcast but with light winds making it a reasonable winter's day.

The pines were rather quiet but we eventually met up with a mixed party of tits and saw the usual gathering of Little Grebes on the pond. A short visit to the recently re-located hide, now overlooking a much enlarged scrape, allowed good views of Mallards, a pair of Gadwalls and a number of Teal. From this view point we were also able to see large numbers of Brent Geese, a family party of Pink-footed Geese and many Wigeon on the marsh beyond the pools. English Nature are to be congratulated on these changed facilities which, I am sure, will prove to be of great benefit to both birds and bird watchers.

The beach had a few waders feeding by the water's edge - Sanderlings, Grey Plovers and odd Redshanks and Bar-tailed Godwits. Off-shore there was a very large raft of Common Scoters amongst which we saw two or three small parties of Velvet Scoters and three drake Eiders. On returning to the car park a party of nine Shorelarks feeding busily on the embryo saltmarsh provided the highlight of the day. These delightful visitors gave excellent views of their black and lemon head and throat patterns. Once quite common in Winter on the North Norfolk Coast, a party of nine is the largest recorded number for about five years.

After lunch a few hardy members walked in Holkham Park adding one or two species to the list which totalled 57 at the end of a pleasant and interesting day. Our thanks are due to Colin Dack for arranging and leading the walk.

D.A.D.

BROADLAND'S BOOK

Martin George, who was Regional Officer of the Nature Conservancy Council until he retired last year, has compiled a lengthy account of Broadland's past and present land use, ecology and conservation. The book runs to 520 pages -A4 size - and includes over a hundred illustrations, many in colour, plus numerous maps and diagrams. It also contains an extensive list of references.

The work includes descriptions of the geology, soils, climate, water regime and limnology of the region, plus chapters on the fens, the drained marshland area, the flooding problem, and the past and present usage and management of the waterways. There are also detailed accounts of the way in which the region is administered, both now and in the past, and of the steps which conservationists are taking to restore Broadland to the state it was in in the 1930's.

The book will be retailed at £50, but Martin has offered to sell it to paid-up members of the Society for £37.50. Copies at this price can be purchased from Martin himself (he lives at Marsh House, Strumpshaw, beside the RSPB's reserve), or from How Hill, or the Norwich Offices of the Norfolk Naturalist's Trust (72 Cathedral Close) or the Broads Authority (18 Colegate).

A DANGEROUS GAME

I regularly write nature articles for the Yarmouth Mercury under the heading 'World Of Nature'. In November last year I had an article published which dealt with the dangers of picking wild mushrooms for consumption, by those who know little about what they are doing. To press the point, I gave details of the symptoms of poisoning by *Amanita phalloides*, the death Cap.

The article was intended, purely to try to make people aware of the dangers.

I usually invite letters or calls from the readers about their experiences and observations and I have a very good response, a naturalist can learn much from such a source. That evening a gentleman telephoned me, somewhat alarmed after having read the article, he told me that he had experienced some of the symptoms described and had in fact suffered them for around three weeks. I began to question him as to whether he had eaten wild mushrooms and found that he regularly collected and ate them, trying new species as and when he encountered them. He liked to try them himself first and if they seemed alright, he then allowed his family to eat them. I suggested that he was playing a dangerous game. Further questions about recently eaten species, their characteristics, habitats and appearance, eventually told me that the species that had caused his problems and discomfiture, was *Agaricus xanthodermus* a species that is known to be poisonous, though some people seem to be unaffected by them. I suggested that a visit to the doctor might be in order and to tell the doctor the name of the species, which he had apparently eaten on several occasions. Doctors are sometimes able to refer to their medical books with regard to fungal poisoning in order to determine the toxins that they contain so an effective treatment can be achieved.

I couldn't help thinking to myself that it was folk such as this that my original article was aimed at.

Tony Brown.

A FUNGUS FORAY IN THE BATTLE AREA

As we are pass holders for the Battle Area, we endeavour to make a collection of Fungi each autumn, in a different part of the area, to help enlarge the list of species from all disciplines held at Range HQ, and also by Reg and Lil Evans, the county recorders, to whom almost all specimens are taken for verification. This year we collected in the vicinity of Stanford Church and also on part of Bodney Warren on the rather late date of November 15th. Among our gatherings were several species that Reg felt were worthy of comment in Natterjack.

Crepidotus mollis A stump near Stanford church was covered with brackets of this species many of which were up to ten cm across-considerably larger than given in the books. This species is not particularly common in Norfolk.

Lepiota aspera A fine specimen of this near Stanford church. Instead of the scales usual in the genus, the cap under the lens appears to be dotted with little brown pyramids. Not common, but found for the second year in Stanta.

Melanoleuca arcuata Again near Stanford church, and only the second record that Reg has for it.

Inocybe nitiduscula Near Stanford church. Second record on Reg's card index.

Crinipellus stipitarius Abundant amongst short sheep grazed-grass on Bodney Warren in places. Looks like a tiny brownish *Lepiota* with fibres on both cap and stem. Very few Norfolk records and may be overlooked due to its small size. One to look out for in close grazed grassland in the Brecks.

Alec & Rita Bull.

An Atlas of NORFOLK BUTTERFLIES 1984 - 1988

Over 50,000 records from 250 recorders went into the production of this work. It shows the recent distribution of 31 butterflies found in the county of Norfolk, with exception of one or two casual migrants.

Mike Hall is to be congratulated for his dedication to such a time consuming task.

Past distributions are discussed, as are foodplants and habitats. Although not intended as an identification guide sixteen species are superbly illustrated in natural pose by Doug Hammersley. One slip however appears with the last illustration. A Chalkhill blue has the caption Silver-studded blue.

Checking against older distributions makes one realize that Norfolk has lost at least eleven species during the last one hundred years, so what of the future in our changing environment? Only further recordings will reveal.

It is a bargain at £2.95 plus postage, from the Norfolk branch of the British Butterfly Conservation Society. 1A Tuckswood Lane, Norwich. NR4 6BD
Ken Durrant.

MICROSCOPY GROUP

The following meetings have been arranged for the first half of 1992

16th April 7.30p.m.

Mike Woolner, a practical mycologist, will show us how the microscope aids his studies.
'Gossip' sessions with the above!

6th June

A practical session with the great demonstrator and instructor, Eric Marson. This meeting is scheduled for 2.30p.m.. Eric asks us to bring our own implements if possible, fine forceps and fine scissors - microscope of course. Specimens, chemicals and apparatus will be provided.

All meetings are held in the Castle Museum, Norwich.

CUTTLEFISH

At the same time as large numbers of birds on The Wash were being killed by the cold spell in February 1991, many thousands of 'bones' of the Common Cuttlefish washed up on the beach from Hunstanton to Snettisham. When I first saw them, on February 13th, they were all on the same fresh tideline, forming a white ribbon along the beach, and no more turned up on following days. They had clearly all been washed up within a very short space of time, perhaps even on the same tide. While I could have understood whole animals being cast up as a result of some marine disaster, I was at a loss to explain how the bones of long dead animals could arrive on the beach simultaneously in such numbers. I have since been enlightened by a marine biologist friend. Apparently the Cuttlefish is one of those animals which congregate en masse to spawn, and then die. This would of course result in an accumulation of bones in a small area of seabed, which could be disturbed and washed up long after in the way that I witnessed.

Paul Cobb.

WEYBOURNE

Sunday 26th January 1992

After a foggy Saturday, Mike Poulton arrived at Weybourne wondering whether anyone would turn up to look for birds on the Sunday. Fortunately the fog had cleared and the clear sky and bright light was good for sea watching, even if the cold weather did not encourage people to stand still for long. A group of 15 people assembled at Weybourne whilst two others went to Holkham by mistake, despite Colin's notices, and did not find us until about 3.0 p.m. at Cley. The first bird seen was a Red-Throated Diver, the first of several seen as we walked along the coast. Looking inland it was possible with a telescope to identify a flock of Pinkfeet and several Turnstone were seen on the shingle. Walking westward a Gannet was spotted well out to sea and a flock of Scoter flew westward. Turning up the path to the Quaggs a small party of twite and three brightly coloured Yellowhammers were seen. There were several Wigeon and Teal on the pond and close up views were had of two Egyptian geese. In the field above the pond were several Curlew and Lapwings. Two Hares were also seen. After returning to the cars, those who wished to stay for the afternoon drove to Cley beach carpark where packed lunches were eaten in front of a field full of Brent Geese and Golden Plover. A walk eastward along the shingle bank enabled us to locate a party of Snow Buntings, but the Lapland Bunting reputed to be with them was not seen.

Mike Poulton.

APPEAL FOR HELP

You will all have read or heard about the County Council's plans for a rubbish mountain on Hardwick airfield, near Hempnall. We have been approached by the Joint Parish Councils' Action Committee who are anxious that we prepare a dossier on the wildlife of the area to be presented at the Public Enquiry, which will probably be held in the autumn. If anyone has interesting records from the area of Hardwick airfield or the adjacent Spring Wood please would they send them to me or to Paul Banham, Chairman of the Research Committee?

Alec Bull.

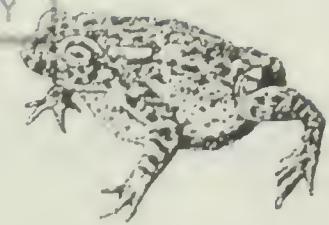
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S.296.A



Number 37

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



May 1992

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

CHANGE OF THE SOCIETY'S OFFICERS

At the Society's Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd April 1992, Mrs. Anne Brewster completed three very successful years as Chairman and was succeeded in the chair by Don Dorling. Consequently Don relinquished the position of Honorary Treasurer. Alec Bull retired as General Secretary to concentrate his energies on the proposed new Flora of the County. Both were thanked by the outgoing Chairman for their services to the Society over many years.

The New General Secretary and Honorary Treasurer are:

General Secretary

Dr. A. R. Leech

3, Eccles Road,
Holt
Norfolk. NR25 6HJ
0603 91 712282

Telephone

Honorary Treasurer

Mr. D. I. Richmond
42, Richmond Rise,
Reepham,
Norwich. NR10 4LS
0603 871000

Telephone

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Dr. Tony Irwin was confirmed as President for the current year. Mrs. G. Dickey, and Messrs F. Farrow, P. Lambley, M. Poulton and P.J. Wanstall were elected to Council.

NEWS HEADLINES

It has been suggested that the practice of asking members at meetings for any items of natural history news should be revived. The idea was taken up following the formal business of the AGM on 22nd April. Rex Hancy mentioned that his attention had been drawn to two large spiders which had recently been found in bunches of Bananas. John Butcher reported that 4 Waxwings were still present at Greenways, Eaton.

We would welcome brief topical items of interest for mention at meetings and the editor of Natterjack will be happy to consider publication of these where appropriate.

HAVE YOU LOST A SLIDE

Have you lost a slide of a Peacock Butterfly on fleabane processed by Coe's. This slide was given to the wrong member after the Society Photographic Group Lecture "The Many Faces of Nature".

BIRDING AT BURNHAM

Sunday 1st March 1992

Undeterred by a distinctly unpromising weather forecast, nearly 20 members gathered at Burnham Overy Staithes and were rewarded with a morning's unexpected sunshine and some splendid sightings.

Winter birds were still about in abundance. From the bank-top path to Gun Hill, we could see dense flocks of Brent, Pink-footed and White-fronted geese. With the tide out, the mud in the channel was a happy hunting ground for large numbers of waders: Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Turnstone, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher.

One of the delights of the day was the charm of more than 20 Goldfinches that rose from the path just ahead of us and headed musically for the saltmarsh.

The rain arrived at lunchtime but the hardy handful (the barmy bunch?) walked from Burnham Norton across the water meadows and back via the Burnham Bank.

It was worth getting wet. Even if the hoped-for owls had more sense than we did and stayed under cover, we found six species of duck Wigeon, Pintail, Shoveler, Teal, Shelduck and Mallard, three more species of geese Canada, Greylag and Egyptian, and a field dotted with dozens of Golden Plover and Lapwing.

David Paull.

LOUD RESERVOIR

The Society joined members of the Great Yarmouth Natural History Society for a meeting at Lound Reservoir on Sunday 26th April. The month lived up to its name with sunny periods in the morning accompanied by a fresh SW wind and later heavy showers.

Both Holly Blue and Green-veined White butterflies were active in sheltered corners and a number of summer migrant birds were on view, including Swallows, Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Blackcap, and a Sedge Warbler. On the water were Canada, Barnacle (6 feral) and Egyptian Geese - the last named with a brood of small young, together with Coots, Moorhens etc. Other bird species recorded include, Mistle and Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Starlings, Robins, Chaffinches, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo (seen and heard), Woodpigeons, and Kestrel.

This proved to be a most interesting area of varied habitat which, we were pleased to learn, will soon be managed as a reserve by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

D.A.D. 27.4.92

BEDROOM DRAMA

Scene: The bedroom of Tony and Barbara Leech, 11.30pm one September.

Barbara: 'Will you please get that insect out of here.'

Tony: 'It won't do any harm I'll put it out if you like. It looks like a large ichneumon Fly.'

Barbara: 'It won't sting will it?'

Tony: 'Oh, no, it belongs to the division of the Hymenoptera called the Parasitica; only the Aculeata sting. Aargh! The bloody thing's stung me!'

Some time later.

Textbook "Netelia testaceus, a very common parasite of moth larvae. Stout ovipositor capable of penetrating human skin if molested."

Footnote: Although not really painful, the irritation persisted for two days suggesting that a venom had been involved. My son cheerfully suggested that it might have laid an egg in me. I assured him that it was not possible and on this occasion appear to have been right.

Tony Leech.

BRECKLAND BOOK

George Jessup has been a member of the Society for 46 years and has written Nature articles for the E.D.P., the Norwich Mercury Series of newspapers, most East Anglian Magazines and some national publications.

He has also given hundreds of illustrated talks on Natural and Local History throughout East Anglia for 40 years. In 1985 he wrote a book on his home town "Watton through the Ages", with the profits going to two local charities. It proved very popular and quickly sold out.

His great love is the "Breckland" area and his illustrated talk on "Breckland Through the Ages" has been seen by thousands of people, many of whom have suggested that he should put his articles on this area into a book for posterity.

At last he has decided to put a selection of them into "Breckland Ramblings", a book that is due out at the end of April this year. It will contain some 160 articles, illustrated with about 100 line drawings and photographs.

The paper back will be retailed at £8.95 and the hard back at £11.95, but George has offered to sell them to paid-up members of the society for £7.60 and £10.60. (Plus 75p Post and Packing).

Copies can be obtained from the following Officers of the Society, Don Dorling, Rex Hancy, Colin Dack and Alec Bull. Also from Nick Gibbons of the Thetford Natural History Society, 4, McKenzie Road, THETFORD, Phone Thetford 752455. Also from George himself at 59, Nelson Court, Watton. Phone Watton (0953) 882846.

Any profit made from sales of the book will be donated to the worthy cause, the Big "C" Appeal.

NORFOLK BIRD REPORT 1991

1992 sees the fifteenth anniversary of the death of Richard Richardson the much-loved Norfolk bird artist and bird-watcher extraordinaire. He was an honorary member of our Society and it seems appropriate to mark the occasion by including in the 1991 Report a selection of his finest illustrations together with those from the pens of the young artists who have won the competition set up in memory of his name: The Richard Richardson Award.

The results of the competition for artists under the age of 21 are linked to the annual Bird Illustrator of the Year competition featured in 'British Birds' magazine.

It is specially pleasing to include an example of Ian Lewington's work. He won the Richard Richardson Award and also the Bird Illustrator of the Year Award in 1985 (at age 20) at his first attempt. He is still the only person to have achieved the double in a single year. Each winner since the competition began has submitted an illustration for the 1991 Norfolk Report.

Line drawings - at the time a considerable innovation - have featured in the county Report since their introduction by Richard in the 1955 issue. At the present time the Society is very fortunate to receive high quality bird illustrations from such professional artists as Norman Arlott, Nik Borrow and Carl Donner. In addition, the excellent artwork contributions from so-called amateurs is greatly appreciated.

M.J.S.

LIFE-CYCLE

Last summer, during a walk over Beeston Regis Common, Cherry found a large green caterpillar crossing a track and brought it home where its identification was confirmed as the larvae of the Emperor Moth *Saturnia pavonia* (Linn.).

I placed it in a container overnight with some hawthorn leaves (one of its listed foodplants) in order to photograph it next morning, however, later that same evening it started to spin its silken cocoon. The cocoon was completed next day, 11th. August, so the container was placed in a shed for the winter.

On April 17th, thinking that the moth should soon emerge, I moved the container closer to a nearby window and on Easter Sunday, 19th April, a fine female Emperor Moth was hanging from the old cocoon. This was approximately 2.30 pm. and I took the moth outside to show the family and to photograph her. With this task completed I placed her about 6 feet up in an ornamental Cherry tree to keep her safe from cats. By now it was about 3 o'clock and within minutes of the moth being placed in the tree a large brownish moth was fluttering around which soon landed next to her and turned out to be a male Emperor. A coupling was attempted causing the moths to fall out of the tree. The male quickly flew off leaving the female in the grass below. I picked her up and placed her on some bramble (the usual foodplant of the larva on the Common) where she soon again had the attention of the male. A second male appeared from the southwest and headed in ever-decreasing circles towards the female.

It was a bright sunny afternoon and warm out of the light east northeast wind. Since the male appeared from the southwest it is likely the pheromones given off by the female were carried to males on the wind. The strength of this scent and the equally remarkable detection by the males via their feathery antenna is phenomenal considering all the competing smells in this modern world.

Personally I haven't seen Emperor Moths for quite a few years although they were plentiful on the coastal heaths when heather was more abundant, especially in the mid-60's. Consequently it was a real pleasure to have them in the garden and to have successfully kept the cocoon through the winter. The moth was gone next morning, hopefully to lay eggs for the next generation on the Common.

Francis and Cherry Farrow.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

This is to remind members that their subscription was due on the 1st April. Cheques should be made payable to the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society. Please send to Mr. D. Richmond, Honorary Treasurer, 42, Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norwich, Norfolk. NR10 4LS

Annual Subscription rates are: Junior £3. Ordinary £8. Family £10. Affiliation £15.

A CHANCE FIND

While examining a number of bees I had collected during a recent visit to Kent, I was delighted to find an example of one of our most curious insects.

Only just visible to the naked eye, I detected the hind end of a female Stylops protruding from the intersegmental membrane on the abdomen of a male *Andrena sp.* bee. (see illustration).

These curious insects comprise a separate order, the *Strepsiptera*, seventeen species being found in the British Isles. The larvae and females live as endoparasites in the bodies of various host insects, mostly bees and wasps.

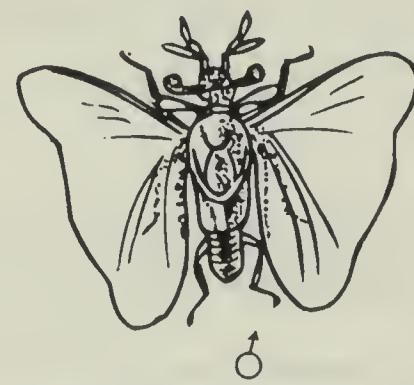
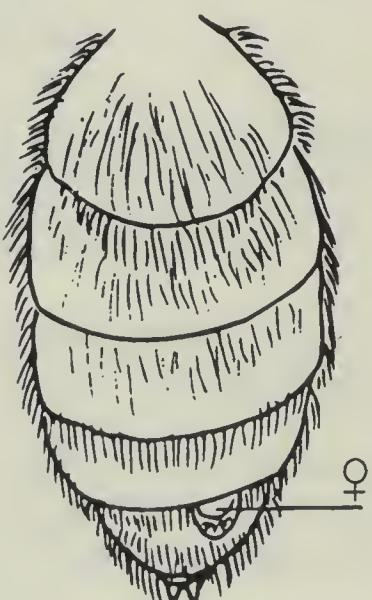
The females resemble minute maggots and never leave the body of the host, only partially protruding when mature to be mated by the free flying males, who after emergence and having located a female by her scent and mated, dies within an hour or so.

The larvae hatch within the body of the female and are released sometimes in vast numbers usually when the host visits flowers. They are extremely minute but have well formed legs and eyes and they are very active, resembling as they do the larvae of the Oil beetle *Meloe* who also congregate on flowers to find a host bee upon which to attach themselves and get taken along to its nest in order to parasitise the larvae.

The Male (see illustration) possess two very large hind wings, the fore wings resembling minute clubs which act as balances in a similar way to the halteres of the Dipteron order *Nematocera*, the craneflies etc. Being so small, approximately 2mm long, they are rarely found. In fact in over fifty years collecting bees this is only the second occasion that I have found an example. Unlike most other parasites however the *Stylopids* do not kill their hosts although they do render them sterile.

It is interesting that the Royal Entomological Society founded in 1833 uses a minute male *Stylops kirbii* as its emblem.

Ken Durrant.



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Number 38

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

NATURAL HISTORY
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- 7 SEP 2010



August 1992

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

SOCIAL EVENING

By popular request, last year's format will be repeated. Everything is relative. The attendance was lower than usual but those who came asked for a repeat.

So why not come along and join us this year? Bring a few slides, no more than nine, sample the wine and cheese and close the evening by reading a favourite literary extract, tell a story or read a poem, on a natural history theme of course.

Nothing is compulsory. The only thing you have to do is buy a ticket (£3) at an autumn meeting or book through us at home. Next year? All may be different again. We expect to attend but as far as organising the evening is concerned, this is our swan song.

Rex and Barbara Hancy



PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP PROGRAMME 1992/93



Monday	14 th September	"Close-ups in the Eastern Mediterranean"	Reg Jones.
Thursday	15 th October	"More pages from the Picture Book"	Rex Hancy.
Friday	27 th November	"Barbados & other Caribbean Islands"	John Oxenford.
Wednesday	16 th December	"Botanising in Majorca & French Pyrenees"	Bob Illingworth.

1993

Thursday	21 st January	"The Blue Ridge, Virginia to Tennessee"	Max Smith.
Thursday	18 th February	"(1) Insects. (2) Pindos Mountains-Greece"	Norman Carmicheal.
Monday	15 th March	"Out & About with a Camera"	Brian MacFarlane.
Wednesday	24 th March	The World of Nature	
		"Group Lecture to the Society"	City Library.
Friday	23 rd April	"By Camera to the Channel Islands"	Joyce Robinson.

Kindly note that with the exception of the Group Lecture to the Society on 24th March all of the Photographic Group meetings as shown above will be held as usual in the Sir Edmund Bacon Room at the Assembly House.

Bob Robinson.

HUNT THE TORTOISE - FIND A BUG

A neighbour come round one evening bearing a small note. His ancient tortoise Toby, had yet again wandered off. How it gets out of its low-walled pen remains a mystery. The last time he went walk-about, he turned up in our garage, and on attempting to pick him up to put him into a box he spat at me quite ferociously - so I spat a few rude words back. His owner was bringing the little notes round to ask people in the area to look in their gardens to see if this 'gentleman (?) of the road' was sheltering there.

Next morning I set off round the garden to search in dark corners and in sheltered spots for Toby. One place I looked was in the thick tangle of weeds under a silver birch tree - no tortoise. But I always look at tree leaves 'just in case' as they quite often turn up interesting finds of another kind. Yes, there was something. I recognised the object on the leaf as a species of shield bug, but what was this? There were eggs underneath it. Also I noticed a thread linked the beast to a chewed off portion of leaf which was bent down as a kind of awning above.

I stood guard over this find as Rex was not due back for a while and I didn't want to lose the bug to a bird before I knew what I'd found. On his return, Rex immediately named it as a parent bug, *Elasmucha grisea*, which was in fact guarding her own batch of eggs. Rex gave me a description to read of how the female chooses a birch leaf in early June where she rests for 2 days and then lays some 30/40 eggs. She stays sitting over the eggs (not incubating) from 2/3 weeks until they've hatched. The larvae stay around the empty eggshells for a few days and then move off together, still under the protection of 'Mum'. The larvae will follow her throughout the second instar, communication taking place between parent and the young themselves by means of the antennae. I read that the parent will also place herself between the young and any 'introduced object' such as a finger or twig. This shieldbug is smaller than some of the other species commonly found but the shape is unmistakable.

Rex did get a photograph, so my wait was worthwhile - but I didn't find the tortoise!

Barbara Hancy 31st May 1992

GRASSES

20th June 1992

About 20 members assemble at Brewers Green, Roydon, near Diss, to study grasses. Arthur Copping opened the meeting by passing round specimens of *Avena fatua* (Wild oat) and explaining the structure of the grass plant and the terminology used in describing it. The party then explored the rough uncut areas of the green noting several common and widespread species including *Arrhenatherum elatius* (False Oat-grass), *Dactylis glomerata* (Cock's - foot), *Poa trivialis* (Rough Meadow - grass), *Lolium perenne* (Perennial Rye - Grass), *Elytrigia repens* (Common Couch), *Agrostis capillaris* (Common Bent), *Deschampsia Cespitosa* ssp. *cespitosa* (Tufted Hair - grass), *Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra* (Red Fescue), *Glyceria fluitans* (Floating Sweet - Grass) and *Phleum bertolonii* (Smaller Cat's - tail).

These gave an excellent introduction to the diversity of shape and form of grass inflorescences. The party paid a brief visit to Arthur's garden to examine some rarer species in cultivation, including seven fescues, and paused to look at *Ceratochloa carinata* (California Brome) which had appeared as a weed in a neighbouring barley field.

After lunch members explored Fair Green, Diss, and saw the dead remains of the *Poa bulbosa* (Bulbous Meadow - grass) population first discovered there in 1991. A nearby sandy area supported large patches of *Aira caryophyllea* (Silver Hair - Grass) and, in one spot, a colony of *Vulpia ciliata* ssp. *ambigua* (Bearded Fescue) was found, a species not previously known in the Diss district.



The meeting ended at Diss Cemetery, parts of which are managed as a conservation area. Here was a fine meadow flora with *Trisetum flavescens* (yellow Oat - grass), *Briza media* (quaking - grass) and *Helictotrichon pubescens* (Downy Oat - grass) in abundance. Also present were *Brychypodium sylvaticum* (False Brome) and *Brychypodium pinnatum* (Tor - grass), the latter rare in Norfolk. The presence of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) scattered among the grasses was noted with pleasure.

The Society wishes to thank the Diss Town Clerk Mrs. K. Vyrnwy - Clarke, for making available for our use the study facilities in the Cemetery buildings.

Arthur Copping.

- 7 SEP 2016

BEESTON REGIS COMMON

A morning excursion in mid week was carried out as an experiment and proved to be a success. Fifteen members attended to see the orchids on Beeston Regis Common on Wednesday 8th July.

Six species were on show some in their thousands, Common spotted, Heath spotted, Marsh Fragrant, Marsh helleborine, Pyramidal, Bee and Lesser butterfly. It was evident that many of the finer species had already become photographic models by the amount of gardening that had been carried out around them. A number of noses were put to use on the Fragrant Orchids and also the Wild celery.

Three insectivorous plants were seen Butterwort, Greater and Round leaved Sundews, Bog pimpernel was still in flower on large areas as was the Dodder on the Gorse. Despite vandalism to the Flowering Rush in the pond the previous week, a few new flower spikes were showing.

Butterflies seen were Large and Small Skippers, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Small Tortoiseshell, Small White and Painted Lady. Oak Eggar, Five-spot Burnet and Silver Y moths were also on the wing. A large colony of Peacock butterfly caterpillars were busy feeding on a nettle patch, by their size they were ready to pupate.

Possibly two or more families of Long-tailed Tits were disturbed while feeding on Aphids in a Sallow, a long flight of twittering individuals made their way to a distant bush as the party approached, Yellow-hammers and Chiffchaffs were calling nearby.

The mature Oak trees were literally covered with Oak apple Galls, the younger trees instead had their leaves dotted on the undersides with Red Pea Galls, and many exhibited the so called pseudo galls the brood chamber of the red weevil *Attelabus nitens*. A number of Mugwort were covered with the Pimple galls of the mites *Eriophyes artemisiae*.

A week before this excursion Alec Bull and myself went around the site to identify grasses and brambles. Alec found sixteen species of Bramble and we found forty nine species of Grasses and sedges in two hours.

Ken Durrant.

On Sunday 7th June, I went to Hickling broad for the day and while rowing around among the reed beds looking for insects, I found numerous caterpillars of the Drinker moth, *Philudora potatoria*, in various stages of growth and generally clinging to the leaves of the reeds.

As I approached a group of reeds, rather more rapidly than I should have, I had to use an oar in order to stop myself and in doing so I accidentally broke one or two reed stems which bent over and into the water. On one of the broken stems, I noticed a cocoon attached to it which I quickly rescued from the water, I

decided to take it home with me and hopefully, have it emerge. I placed it in my caterpillar cage that evening still attached to a piece of reed stem and left it to its own devices. On 23rd June it emerged from the cocoon and clung to the side of the cage until its wings had opened and hardened properly, a splendid female in a beautiful yellow buff colour with brownish streaks.

I decided that I would take it to Lound waterworks in order to release it which I did, on my return home, I found that, in the cage, the female had discharge around sixty or so turquoise green eggs, this I found rather surprising so soon after its emergence, (around four hours) I can only suppose that she felt threatened in captivity and decided to discharge the eggs as a precautionary measure.

I would welcome opinions from lepidopterists regarding this.

Tony Brown, 16 Mariners Park Close, Hopton, Gt. Yarmouth, NR31 9DQ Telephone Lowestoft 732332.

HAVE YOU LOST A SLIDE

Have you lost a slide of a Peacock Butterfly on fleabane processed by Coe's. This slide was given to the wrong member after the Society Photographic Group Lecture "The Many Faces of Nature".

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

This is to remind members that their subscriptions were due on the 1st April. Cheques should be made payable to the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society. Please send to Mr. D. Richmond, Honorary Treasurer, 42, Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norwich, Norfolk. NR10 4LS

Annual Subscription rates are: Junior £3. Ordinary £8. Family £10. Affiliation £15.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. To arrive not later than 1st October 1992. Contributions arriving after this date will not be accepted for the November Natterjack.



This Drawing is by Guy Todd the water colour artist from Blakeney. When I commented that I would like to put it in Natterjack, he gave me the original drawing to use and keep.

*Wishing all twitching members the
very best of luck for the coming
twitching season.*

*Hoping you are able to see many
rarities new to you.*

Colin R. Dack
Editor of Natterjack.

Guy's address for any
one interested
"Shingle Studio"
Westgate Street,
Blakeney, Norfolk.

S 296.A.



Number 39

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

September 1992

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society



PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING ALTERATION TO THE PROGRAMME:

The talk entitled "Hide and Seek" to be given by David Cottridge has had to be changed from 23rd January to **Saturday 6th February 1993** as the speaker now has to go to Nepal in January. The time and venue are unchanged - 2.30 p.m. in Lecture Theatre 2 at the University of East Anglia. The talk has been arranged in conjunction with the Norwich RSPB group, and further details will be notified in due course.

CONSERVATION ISSUES - A PERSONAL VIEW

The Society's Objects include the protection of "endangered species" and throughout its history it has been involved in conservation matters. It was closely associated with the Breydon Water nature reserve and the provision of a "watcher" there to supervise the wildfowling in the close season. Also it was active in the Norfolk Wild Bird Protection Committee in the early 1920's.

Today we are regularly asked to support various objections to new developments which have an impact on our heritage. As individuals we are all drawn into these problems from time to time and no doubt many members have written, like me, letters of protest to Members of Parliament and local planning authorities. The "not in my back yard" syndrome can have a powerful influence on our decisions in these matters and I suspect that some of my protests have been emotionally based rather than built on firm facts.

When the Society is asked to add its weight to such protests it cannot afford the luxury of basing its comments on emotion but must be able to support its arguments with facts. This we try to do using, where appropriate, the services of our Research Committee under the able chairmanship of Paul Banham. He is able to call upon many experts from amongst our membership to give specialist support to our collective views, thus adding weight to our protest.

As individuals we can also increase the effect of our own protests if we are able to quote facts and figures. Thus it is desirable that we all watch and record all significant natural history finding in our local patch because we never know when such records will come in useful to back up our efforts to protect the local environment. The moral is - keep a diary and/or note book. They could prove to be valuable tools in the fight for the environment.

Don Dorling.

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Regular readers of Natterjack will be aware of my interest in the grasshoppers and bush-crickets of Norfolk, and in their interrelation with the history of the countryside, particularly the distribution of ancient commons as portrayed on Faden's 1797 map of Norfolk (published in book form by Larks Press, Dereham).

This season I have concentrated on trying to identify the western boundary of the Dark Bush-cricket *Pholidoptera griseoaptera* which coincides with the change from the ancient countryside of small fields and mixed species hedgerows in the east, to a more modern, planned countryside of enclosed open fields and sheepwalks, with regulation hawthorn hedges in the west.

Our journey begins at Fakenham, where the insect can be heard chirping from rough vegetation at Hempton Common and followed westward along roadside ditches and hedges to Reynolds Plantation (TF8828), but suddenly as we cross the upper reaches of the Wensum (here flowing northwards before curving past Fakenham into the Wensum valley) all is silent. Not a sound was heard as I journeyed south through Tatterford, Helhoughton and West Raynham, but as I crossed back over the Wensum to East Raynham, the insect was suddenly abundant again on the roadside verges of the A1065 (TF8824).

Turning south on minor roads, bush-crickets were present at Uphouses (8823), Wellingham (8721) and Litcham Heath (8620). On the ground these sites are nothing special, just roadside verges in arable countryside; but on Faden's map all these are central to large areas of common or heathland.

The next sites southward are at Litcham itself, on the B1145 entering the town from the west, and at Litcham Common. To the west I have failed to find them at Lexham or Great Dunham.

Continuing southward we meet the Dereham to Swaffham railway line at Great Fransham, where Dark Bush-cricket is present; and this line seems to have provided a corridor for expansion to the west, for the species can be found in close proximity to the railway at Little Dunham (8613), Palgrave (8310), (with a bridleway hedge link to Swaffham Plashes 8210), Tumbler Hill (828098) on the east side of Swaffham, and 1km west of Swaffham at TF805095 where the Swaffham bypass rejoins the old A47. There was no sound of the insect further along the railway at Swaffham Raceway.

Heading back eastward, the Swaffham to Watton railway now comes into play as the western boundary for the insect. It is present at the TF825095 road bridge in Swaffham, on the Peddars Way crossing at TF8507, at Park Farm, Saham (TF9105), Ovington (TF9102), Wayland Wood (TL9299) and Stow Bedon station (TL9496). All of the sites outside Swaffham are ancient woodland or commons on Faden's map. It is possible that some sites west of this railway remain to be discovered, but recent visits to North Pickenham Warren, South Pickenham, Ashill and Saham Toney drew blanks.

I have not yet researched the area south of Stow Bedon, but I have some interesting challenges ahead before I link up with the next known site, 12km away at Harling 5-ways. Will the distribution follow the railway and head for Hockham and Roudham, or will it be much further to the east with the River Thet providing the boundary between Shropham and Harling? Wherever the boundary lies, it will be abrupt, and that is what makes this insect so fascinating.

I remain interested in all records of grasshoppers, bush-crickets, groundhoppers and earwigs from anywhere in the county. Ones which show new tetrads relative to the distribution maps published in the 1991 Transactions article are particularly important. Why not look them out now before you forget?

David Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk. NR10 4LS.

MORSTON QUAY

A walk from the National Trust car park at Morston on Sunday 20th September, illustrated just how important the estuary is as a wintering ground and refuelling stop-over for waders.

The track beside Morston Creek, much improved with new bridges, led us to the sandy path parallel to the Blakeney Channel - and almost at once produced fine views of large numbers of waders.

Some grey and golden plovers and dunlin were still wholly or partly in their black summer garb. In among the noisy, showy oystercatchers and lapwing were curlew, redshank, turnstone, greenshank and ringed plovers.

Heron and cormorant entertained us with fly-pasts, and there were four species of gull in evidence - great and lesser black-backed, common and black-headed.

After lunch, we walked westward along the Greens and found a fine viewpoint looking out over Stiffkey Freshes. We already knew before we reached there that we would be seeing large flocks of bar-tailed godwit and Brent geese because a foolhardy microlight pilot had put up the birds by flying very low over the mudflats. One Brent in his propeller and he would have met a muddy end.

As with the plovers and dunlin, some of the godwits were in summer plumage, a few still showing rich chestnut all over.

It was the wrong time of year for duck but small numbers of wigeon and shelduck were seen.

With, by chance, both tide and weather perfect, a good day's birding at one of the most evocative places in Norfolk.

David Paull.

FUNGUS FORAY : HOCKERING WOOD

On 30th June this year, with permission, a small group visited this site. This was expected to be more a social occasion than a fungus recording event. However the following uncommon to rare species were found.

Masses of brown jelly-like material on fallen branches were *Tremella foliacea* recorded here previously but not at all common elsewhere. From dead fallen conifer branches arose the yellowish 'antlers' of *Calocera pallido-spathulata* which has become common in Norfolk in recent years.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was the toadstool *Megacollybia platyphylla* (in older books this is *Tricholomopsis platyphylla*). There were about 100-150 specimens scattered throughout the wood. It seems particularly common in this wood, even at this early date, having been recorded here on several occasions. This fungus has a cap 6-15cms in diameter with radiating brown fibrils on a paler background. The gills are broad and white. At the base of the cream coloured stipe there are usually white long cords in the leaf litter. Hockering Wood seems to suit this fungus!

Reg & Lil Evans

WEEVIL ENEMY

On a recent foray we came upon nests of a black and yellow solitary wasp. There were about 50 holes made in the sandy soil and the wasps were continually arriving and leaving. One of these wasps was examined and found to be *Cerceris arenaria* which was carrying a small weevil *Otiorhynchus singularis*.

These weevils are caught and left in the tunnel as food for the young of the solitary wasp.

Reg Evans.

A FLY - NEW TO ENGLAND

The study of fungi often leads into other areas of natural history and I have been interested in the association of various insects with them.

As a result the life history of some fungus gnats has been clarified and a number of new Norfolk records produced, with the help of a specialist.

Among these results is a fly previously known from a few Scottish records *Allodia czernyi* - *mycetophilidae*.

Reg Evans.

SPIDER KILLER

On one of our forays a folded leaf was examined and found to contain a dead spider, and also two larvae of a spider wasp. These were mottled with white spots on a grey background and both ends pale.

From these after pupation emerged a male and female spider wasp *Zaglyptus varipes*. We have recorded this before in the county from another area where the larvae had eaten both the spider and its eggs, but in this case only the remains of a dead clubiona spider were present.

Reg Evans.

“THINGS IN STICKS”

Solitary wasps do not form large colonies as do the social wasps with which most people are familiar. Each female solitary wasp make a nest for her young and many of these are to be found in dead twigs and decayed wood. Her work may be apparent as holes bored in the pith of woody stems.

Within the tunnels she brings prey which may be aphids, spiders, flies etc according to her species. About 50 of these nests have been examined, the insects reared and mostly released.

This proved a rewarding study as in addition to the solitary wasps there emerged parasites - flies, ichneumon wasps, ruby tail wasps and chalcids.

As an example one collection - a dead buddleia stem produced solitary wasps *Rhopalum coarctatum* and *Crossocerus walkeri* ‘Ruby tailed wasp’ *Trychrysis cyanea* and a fly (*Metopia* species - to be confirmed). Another nest produced the ichneumon *Perithous divinator*.

It is likely that many of these harmless insects nests find their way as prunings to the garden bonfire

Reg Evans.

STINGLESS NETTLES

For many years British botanists have known a narrow-leaved and almost stingless nettle growing in Wicken and Chippenham Fens. In "A Flora of Cambridgeshire" (1964) this is stated to be "probably referable to forma *angustifolia*", i.e. a supposed variant of the common stinging nettle *Urtica dioica*. In 1991 a botanist from St. Petersburg (D. V. Geltman) examined the Wicken Plants and decided these were a new British Species of nettle, *Urtica galeopsifolia*, which has quite a distinct range of habitat - damp woodlands, river banks and fens. He has recognised the species in Central and Eastern Europe. The spotting features in the field (which are not totally reliable) are longer and distinctly narrower leaves and non-stinging hairs. Generally speaking, these plants have up to now been thought to be forms of the common stinging nettle and as such not often mentioned specially in British County and local Floras, but where recognised they have been variously called forma *angustifolia*, variety *angustifolia* and variety *inermis*.

I was first shown the plant many years ago in the damp areas adjoining the Ouse Washes near Welches Dam on a joint field meeting with Norfolk and Cambridgeshire botanists when it was named by the latter variety *inermis*. Since then I have noted such plants as I saw them casually when botanising for other purposes. I have Norfolk records from Harford Tip, the River Walk Norwich, Lenwade, Ringland, Santon Downham, and quite recently on the Thorpe St. Andrew side of the River Yare near Whitlingham Reach. All these were wetland sites.

A full description of our plants must await the second edition of Flora Europaea (in press) but as well as features stated it is stated that *U. galeopsifolia* has its lowest flowering branches between the 13th and 22nd nodes; in common stinging nettle these are between 7th and 14th nodes. Significantly, the chromosome number of the stingless plant is only half that of the common nettle. In the 1st edition of Flora Europaea *U. galopsifolia* is only referred to in the Index (in italics) indicating the authors then considered it to be just one of the states of our common nettle.

It seems likely that the Norfolk plants are the same as the Cambridgeshire species and this note is intended to draw Members' attention to the situation. *U. galeopsifolia* is easily noticed from leaf shape, habitat and the absence of stinging to be tested by brushing the back of the hand along the upper leaf margins. Sometimes you may guess wrong! The plants should be placed on record when found.

Reference: Geltman, D.V. (1992). *Urtica galeopsifolia*
Wierzb. ex Opiz (Urticaceae) In Wicken Fen (E. England).
Watsonia Vol. 19 PT.2 Pp. 127-129.

E.T. Daniels.

TWO NEW RECORDS FOR NORFOLK DURING AUGUST 1992

The first is a gall formed on sweetcorn or forage maize. Appearing like a small, greenish/white clenched fist on any part of the plant, when split it sheds blackish spores. Rex identified it as sweetcorn smut, *Ustilago maydis*, which is associated with hot summers, first becoming significant in Great Britain in 1975/76. (See Collins Guide to the Pests, Diseases and Disorders of Garden Plants, Stephan Buczacki and Keith Harris, illus. Brian Hargreaves).

The second record is of a fungus. A phone call to us from a reader of EDP's 'In the Countryside' articles described a funny toadstool, which had come up in some potting compost purchased from a garden centre. Specimens were subsequently brought to Radio Norfolk in a plant pot for us to look at.

I would describe the colour as 'fluorescent-sock yellow' and hope this gives readers the correct mental picture! The toadstools, averaging 2½" in height and 1½" across, were flocked with scales on stipe and cap

and were exceedingly beautiful.

Unfortunately by the time they were transported to Taverham the colour had faded and they were collapsing and drying. I dried out one to take to Reg Evans and consulted what literature we had. In the Marcel Bon (Collins) page 289 I found what looked to be exactly right, *Leucocoprinus birnbaumii*. However Reg Evans was consulted and after careful scrutiny he gave me the thumbs up. He himself had not seen it for many years and it was definitely a new record for Norfolk. He has added the dried specimen to his already large reference collection.

This tropical species manifests itself in greenhouses and glasshouses due to the humidity and heat.

Barbara Hancy.

Over the years on occasions, I have kept aquariums for the purpose of observing various aquatic creatures that I have at times taken from the wild, from ponds or other areas of water. I have successfully bred three spined sticklebacks, I have raised dragonflies and damselflies from nymphs, aquatic beetles from their respective larva and of course frogs and toads from tadpoles. Some time ago, I raised some caddisflies of the species *Limnophilus flavicornis* to adulthood from the larval stage. The habits of the larvae were of great interest to me but it was the larval case itself that interested me most.

This species constructs some of its cases from the very small shells of snails and limpets, all carefully cemented together to form a hollow tube a little over an inch long with a small opening at either end.

On several occasions I have observed that certain of the shells attached to the case contained live specimens of snails or limpets and in many instances these tiny molluscs have lived for long periods of time in this way. When one considers the habits of these tiny creatures, crawling around on the bottom of ponds or on submerged foliage in order to obtain their food, I find it very difficult to understand how they can sustain life whilst being held fast to the caddis case and thus unable to feed themselves.

Often when the caddis imago has emerged and I have dried the case out, the glue that held them so tightly together in the water, still bonds the shells to such an extent that any attempt to prise a shell away from the case, usually ends up by breaking into pieces before it yields from its bond. They will still hold together in this way many years after its tenant has left.

Tony Brown.

SPIDER EGGS DESTROYED

A flat egg sac was found in a folded leaf and a spider *Xysticus ulmi* was present and was allowed to escape. The egg sac contained no eggs but only the cocoon of a parasite *Trychosis legator*. This seems to choose only this particular spiders egg sac for her young.

Reg Evans.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TRANSACTIONS WILL MEMBERS PLEASE SEND CONTRIBUTIONS TO PETER LAMBLEY, THE COTTAGE, ELSING ROAD, LYNG, NORWICH, NORFOLK. He has now taken over as Editor, as R. (Dick) Jones has retired.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. To arrive not later than 1st January 1993. Contributions arriving after this date will not be accepted for the February Natterjack.

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BRITISH MUSEUM
(NATURAL HISTORY)

10 MAR 1993

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THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

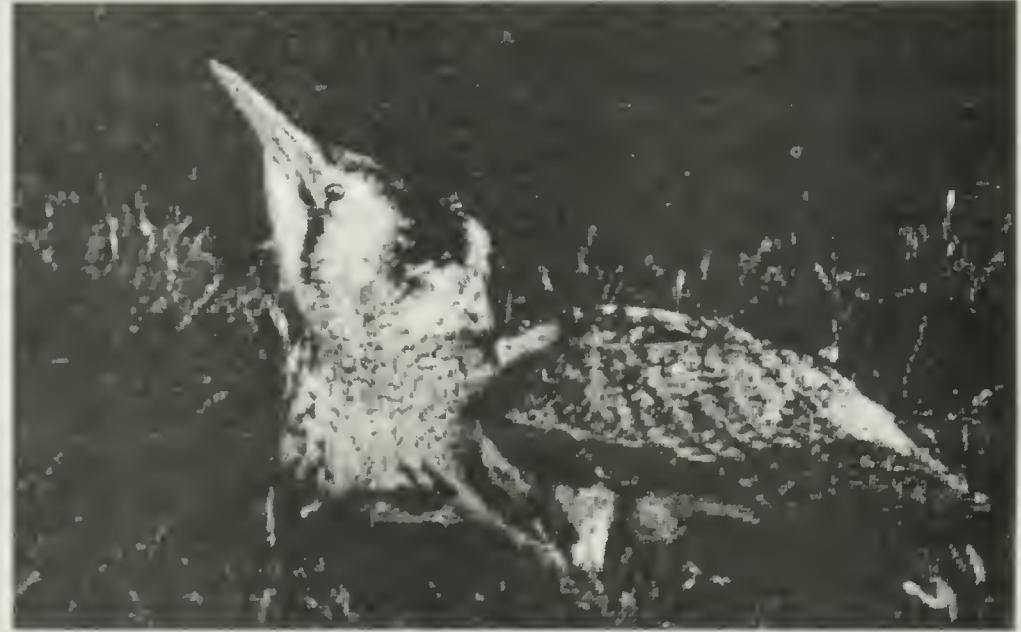
Number 40

February 1993

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

BITTERN BATTLES ON.

At the begining of December 1992, Miss Pat Buckle of Sheringham, who is known locally for her work with injured wildlife, had a bittern passed on to her. The bittern was picked up on the coast road at Cley and appeared to have a damaged wing. Miss Buckle fed the bird on sprats and water, a diet it seemed to cope with admirably, until such time as it could be taken to Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park, near Fakenham. The photograph (taken by Cherry) shows the bittern prior to its transfer to Pensthorpe. At Pensthorpe the bittern was attended to by local vet Mr. Gordon Brown, who performed a most delicate operation which required the placing of both internal and external pins to set its damaged wing. At the time of writing (Dec. 22nd.) it is reported that the bittern is alive and recovering. It is still on a diet of sprats (with antibiotics) and is held in a small enclosure with an infra-red heat lamp. Since the injury to the wing was possibly a fortnight old before treatment, it is not sure if it will regain the full use of the wing, although it has been estimated to have a 1 in 10 chance of flying again. If recovery is satisfactory the bittern will, of course, be released back into the wild.



Francis and Cherry Farrow.

SPRING OUTING TO HICKLING BROAD

The excursion planned for Sunday 16th May is limited to 24 members due to boats available and the size of observation hides. Booking in writing needs to be received by Michael Seago (33 Acacia Road, Thorpe St. Andrew, Norwich. NR7 0PP) by April 30th at the latest. A variety of migrants should be on show; also Marsh Harriers. By courtesy of Mr. Christopher Cadbury, Whiteslea Lodge (and its collection of bird paintings) will be open for members during the afternoon - a unique opportunity!

BADGERS PAST....

The considerable interest and correspondence in the local press about Norfolk badgers recently reminded me of my one and only encounter with Brock.

Back in 1964 there was a report that a badger had been killed by a car near Pretty Corner, Sheringham. Later, while walking around the area I found a boar badger, unfortunately dead, killed not by a car, but presumably by a gamekeeper or such-like as it was hanging in a tree (see illustration).

Taking this memory further I checked the 1970, 1980, and 1987-91 Bird and Mammal Reports for any update on the status of N. Norfolk badgers. In the 1980 paper on "Norfolk Badgers 1971-1981" by A.E. Vine I read that a pregnant sow badger was killed by a car and that a boar had been snared from a sett occupied up to 1971. The sett was located in woodland that has been subsequently divided by the "new" main road between Cromer and Holt and "developed" in part to accomodate the local council rubbish tip. It seems strange that the circumstances and location of the badger I found and those reported are the same. My photograph is dated 14th. March, 1964. Could there have been a discrepancy in the 1980 report? If so it means that badgers were lost from this site 7 years earlier, however, it is still over 20 years since badgers were seen at this location. I found no references to the re-colonisation of the area but maybe someone is "in the know" and is safe-guarding a sett. I would like to think so as it would be a great pity if the badger is lost from the Cromer-Holt ridge forever.



Francis Farrow.

Can you fill the gaps in Norfolk's Natural History?

From "FAUNA AND FLORA OF NORFOLK Part III. Fungi by Charles B. Plowright, M.R.C.S." NNNS Transactions 1872.

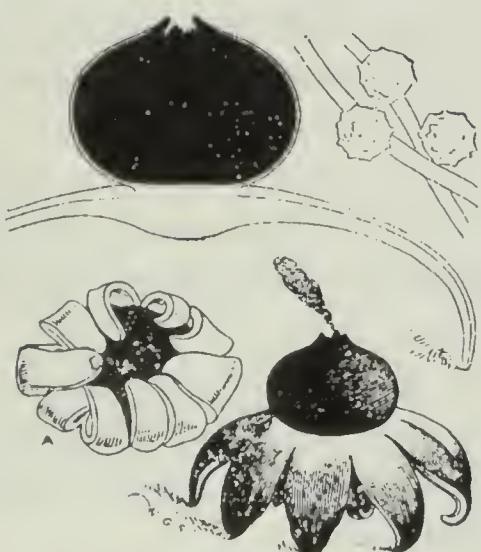


Fig. 13. GEASTER HYGROMETRICUS. P

Have you checked the contents of your attic or dusted great uncle's library lately? The following missing part volumes of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Transactions are required to complete the run from 1869. The majority of the volumes, the former property of Lt. Col. J. E. Gurney, were obtained at the Tacolneston Hall auction last May. When combined with my own run from 1963 (Bird and Mammal Reports) and 1970 (Transactions) 18 parts remained outstanding, however, thanks to Don and Mary Dorling and Richard Hobbs a further 14 parts were obtained from the NNT. This left four parts to locate, but thanks to Tony Irwin and Alec Bull, who kindly supplied a further part each, only the following two parts are now required.

Volume XII

Part II

1925-26

Transactions

Volume XIII

Part I

1929-30

Transactions

If you can offer any of the above Transactions to help complete the set then please contact me:
Francis Farrow, "Heathlands", 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD.
Tel: (0263) 823775.

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

BRITISH MUSEUM
(NATURAL HISTORY)
10 MARCH 1993

The Photographic Group is just completing a successful tenth season during which the small but regular band of supporters has enjoyed a wide variety of talks both instructive in photographic techniques and entertaining. For all of this period the Group has been organised and lead by Bob Robinson, who is known both nationally and internationally for his pictorial and natural history photographic prowess.

Bob has now decided that he must relinquish this role and all members of the Group will miss his knowledge and time which has been so freely given. All of those who have attended these sessions over the ten years will, I am sure, wish to join with me in thanking Bob for his efforts on our behalf.

The Group will continue in being and all members of the Society are welcome to attend these informal monthly meeting at the Assembly House. The dates for next session will be published in the Programme in due course.

Don Dorling.

GALLS IN ABUNDANCE ON THE OAKS

From the almost complete disappearance of Spangle galls in 1991, not only in Norfolk but in the country as a whole, to the magnificent showing in 1992, certainly needs some explaining.

All over the county last autumn I found the three main Spangle galls in surprisingly large numbers. On Foulden Common one side of a large oak had nearly all of its leaves covered underneath with Silk-button galls, so that each leaf resembled a felt patch. I took ten leaves at random and on counting the galls averaged out at 190 per leaf. In the past I have seen odd leaves with up to 250 separate galls, but I have never seen such a mass of affected leaves before.

The common Spangle galls although numerous did not seem to be common as were the Smooth Spangle galls which I found in larger numbers than in the past. Oak apples during the summer were also extremely abundant. Some of the oaks on Beeston Common resemble apple trees in fruit, they had so many galls on them.

Cherry galls were also very numerous. I found leaves with up to five galls on their undersides over twenty mm. in diameter. The Knopper galls also had a field day, the ground being carpeted with them around the affected trees. Rough Marble galls now seem to be as common as the Marble gall. I found many twigs containing both species close together.

The question is what happened to the Spangle gall wasps in 1991?

Did the weather cause them to remain in galls on the ground for 12 months the year before?

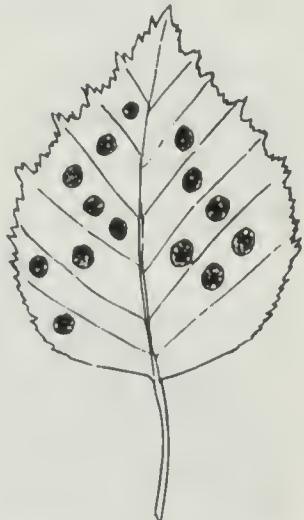
Did they produce galls in the tops of the trees, out of sight from the ground, instead of on the lower leaves as normal?

Did parasites destroy most of them?

So many questions at the moment, but not many answers.

One gall which had eluded me over the years at last turned up in front of my nose when I was searching for caterpillars on birch on Beeston Common. This is the Black Blister gall on birch leaves. They appear as small circular blisters 2.5mm. in diameter situated in between the veins and are visible on both sides of the leaf. The larva of the minute midge leaves the gall and pupates in the soil in the autumn. The name of the minute midge is *Anisostephus betulinum* Kiefer.

Ken Durrant



NORFOLK BIRD REPORT 1992

A specially extended issue with additional vignettes and colour plates is planned. In addition to highly talented amateurs, no less than eight professional artists and photographers have generously agreed to provide illustrations.

Among articles it is expected to include a full-length essay covering the creation and management of the flooded fresh-marshes at Holkham NNR and also an article describing some of the main events and changes in Norfolk ornithology during the past four decades. A check-list of all the birds of Norfolk, with notes, is also planned.

Michael Seago

SPRING IS ON THE WAY

Last time I wrote of those dull damp days before Christmas. We have had a spell of grey days since Christmas but today dawned bright and clear after an overnight frost and the sun was shining again after many days absence.

The change in mood could be sensed as soon as I entered the footpath. The Rooks were noisily going about their business in the tall trees by the Hall where they have nested for many years. Across the little valley the flute like notes of a Mistle Thrush could be heard. All along the path there were Great and Blue Tits singing, the former giving fine displays of their varied repertoire. Only two of their Long Tailed cousins were seen, presumably the desire to set up breeding territories had broken up the flocks present earlier in the winter.

Across the park a unseen Kestrel was calling. Feeding on the short grass amongst the fresh mole hills was a large party of Redwings with others in the large old oaks and beeches. From these came a subdued chorus reminiscent of a party of Starlings. This was the largest gathering of our wintering thrushes that I had seen in the area since soon after arrival in the Autumn.

Lower down the path, towards the lake, three Mistle Thrushes were in dispute in the tree tops and a Nuthatch was calling loudly between bouts of feeding on the bare branches. A distant drumming was the only indication that woodpeckers were present. Two visiting drake Tufted Ducks were diving on the lake which they shared with the resident Moorhens, Coots and Mallards. In this area the strong smell of a Fox was evident in the still air.

There was also much evidence of plant growth with the shiny leaves of Lords and Ladies appearing in many places and Dogs Mercury already in flower on a sheltered bank. This, together with the songs of Chaffinches in the trees and Skylarks high above the arable fields, made today one of those "bright days before Spring". A view confirmed later when two Peacock butterflies were seen on the wing in the garden.

Don Dorling.

FOR THE RECORD

This year as in previous years I have received a number of requests for membership card. The Society does not have membership card. I believe the members making the requests could be getting the Society confused with the Trust. The Trust does have membership cards.

MORE ABOUT DIATOMS

I showed the paper about Broadland Epiphytic Diatoms (in last "Transactions") by Zandra Waterford and Bob Driscoll to Bernard Hartley, a one-time Society member and now Britain's leading diatom taxonomist. He was specially pleased to see references to two former great Norfolk diatomists - T. Brightwell and Fred Kitton, after whom several species and one genus is named. The diatom *Kittonia elaborata* is a beautiful thing "like an inverted two-legged sherry glass" and it occurs in some fossil Eocene rock deposits from Oamaru in South Island, New Zealand. Another *Kittonia* species comes from a similar-aged deposit in Kamischev, Russia. Keith Clarke adds the information that at an International Diatom Seminar he was asked by an American professor "Do you know the Berney Arms Public house?". The American was a world authority on *Chaetoceros wighamii* the type-locality of which was "in a ditch near the Berney Arms public house". It is good to know that these old Norwich workers are so famous and so relevant all these years on, particularly as one of them was a president of our Society. A few biographical details follow.

Robert Wigham

He was born in Co. Durham in 1785. As a young man he moved to Norwich and began tobacco manufacturing. A botanist of some repute, he found *Chaetoceros wighamii* which was named after him. In one of his biographies it is stated (quite wrongly) that he supplied a list of plants for Stacy's "History of the City of Norwich" (1829). In fact there is no such publication date. A search in the 1832 edition and the earlier one of 1819 reveals no list of any kind. However, in Vol.1 of Chambers' "A General History of the County of Norfolk" (1829) there is a splendid list of Norfolk plants compiled by Wigham and handsomely acknowledged. He is described as "an indefatigable scientific practical botanist and entomologist..... now a resident in this city (Norwich) where he also practices electricity and galvanism with great effect". He died in 1855.

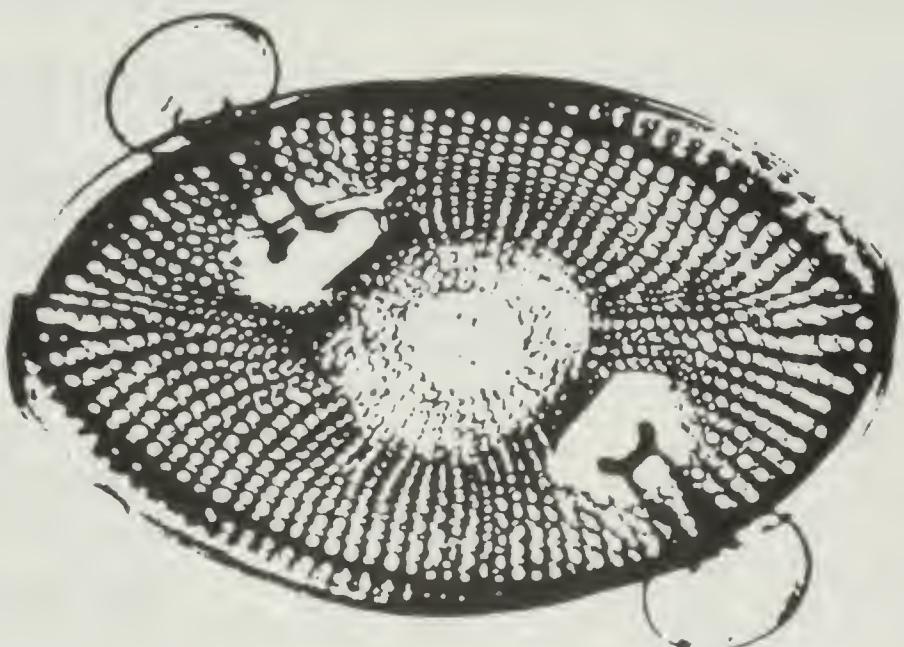
Frederick Kitton

A Founder Member of the Society and President 1873-4 he was born in Cambridgeshire in 1827 and came to Norfolk as a young man of 17 where he was assistant to Robert Wigham at the latter's shop on the Walk. He was a brilliant diatomist with many taxa named after him in the literature of the time. The genus *Kittonia* was created in his honour and he described a new species, *Brightwellia superba*, in memory of Thomas Brightwell (see below). He published County lists in our Transactions and wrote much in Science Gossip and other scientific journals in the 1860's. In the Queckett Microscopical Society's material at the Natural History Museum is a quite beautifully prepared collection of his slides. He died in 1895.

Thomas Brightwell

He was born in Ipswich in 1787 and went to live at Thorpe on his marriage in 1810. Primarily an entomologist, he lived next door to Sir. J. E. Smith in Surrey Street. He published a "Sketch of a Fauna Infusoria for East Norfolk" and named *Chaetoceros wighamii*. He did much work on the genus. He died in 1868.

Ernest Daniels.



Kittonia elaborata Grove & Sturk (x560)



Kittonia tripedia Cheneviere (x 400)

I should like to tell of a couple of more unusual experiences that I had recently. The first concerns that most feared member of the wasp family, the Hornet *Vespa crabro*, though a more peaceful creature than other members of its family. It is well known that they will hibernate in hollow trees or under loose bark or similar such places, it was under loose bark that I recently found a sleeping queen of this species. She had chewed out a fairly large hollow in the wood in which to spend the winter and was peacefully slumbering in a state of torpor when I inadvertently disturbed her. Nothing in the least bit unusual about this circumstance, I agree, but what I found most peculiar was that there was a queen of the common wasp, *Vespula vulgaris*, hibernating in the same hollow not one inch away from the hornet queen both beneath the bark. When one considers that the larger of these creatures attacks and feeds on the smaller, it was most surprising to find them hibernating together in this way.

The second tale concerns the finding of small common newts in soft and rotting stumps and decaying logs. On several occasions I have found very small specimens of these creatures tucked up in the more moist rotting fibres of the wood, usually in a very torpid state. It is well known that young newts leave the water sometime during August when they begin to breathe air. They seek out dark and damp places in which to spend the winter months and obviously such places as stumps and so forth have an attraction for them.

It is most interesting exploring in old logs and stumps during the winter in this way but one must proceed with great care since many creatures select these places in which to hibernate and it is all too easy to unnecessarily disturb, or indeed injure, such unsuspecting creatures, but there is still much to learn.

Tony Brown.

WANTED

Has anyone a copy of "A SEASON OF BIRDS" by E. Vincent and G. Lodge 1980 "FOR SALE". If not does anyone know where I can obtain a copy as this book is now out of print.

My copy was loaned out and has never been returned. My wife and I knew 'Jim Vincent' very well and would like to have a copy of this book.

Arthur Johnson 239 Spixworth Road, Old Catton, Norwich. NR6 7DZ Tel: 0603 429806

ROAD CASUALTY

It took fifty yards to take in what I had seen and another fifty to stop safely. The carcase was the size of a small dog; bloody at one end, sleek and grey at the other. It had to be an otter. Horror at its fate mingled with excitement at the prospect of close examination. Walking back towards the body, I was less than twenty yards away when a passing car provoked an un-otterlike flap from the corpse causing me to revise the identification. I was looking at a small square of red carpet, folded over to reveal its smooth grey foamback!

Tony Leech.

MICROSCOPY GROUP

1993 MEETINGS

Tuesday 20th April -

A tour of laboratories at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, St Stephens Road. Preceded by Buffet! 4.30pm
Numbers are limited so apply directly to Rex Hancy (Tel: Norwich 860042) who will advise where to meet.

Saturday 26th June -

A joint meeting with our friends from the Geological Society of Norfolk.

Meet at the West Runton beach car park at 1.30pm to collect specimens to sort in the Castle Museum from about 4.00 to 5.30pm

Further meeting for this year are being arranged More news later!

PLEASE NOTE: If you park on the Castle Mound, do not leave any valuables in your car. Listing stolen possessions is a very sorry way to end a happy meeting.

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17 MAY 1993

EXCHANGED



Number 41

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

May 1993

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

In March I represented the Society at a conference at the UEA and also at a presentation by English Nature at Beck Row. It seems appropriate to give members brief details of both occasions:

"RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS IN NORFOLK CONSERVATION"

The conference held at the UEA was organised by the Friends of Norwich Museums under the title of "Recent Achievements in Norfolk Conservation".

The principal objective was to bring together the many and diverse organisations involved in conservation of Norfolk's heritage and/or environment. Mr. Timothy Colman took the Chair and the introduction and summary were given by Mr. David Mawson. There were five presentations by specialists in their fields on the following topics -

Recent Work on the Roman Town of Caistor St. Edmund

The conservation of historic landscapes

Protecting the Norfolk Broads and their wildlife

Conservation area extensions in Norwich and

The conservation of the industrial heritage.

It was clear that there was much overlap of interest in the activities of the various organisations involved in the talks; for example the Norfolk Archaeological Trust's developments at Castor St. Edmund will have a considerable natural history interest. It is planned to take the whole area out of arable and to grass over this large site and to lay out walks including a stretch along the River Tas, which borders the Trust's holding. Dr. Tom Williamson was also most thought provoking in his questioning of what is an historic landscape?

It was clear from the discussion in the Open Forum, which concluded the day's proceedings, that many present had found this a most useful day and it is likely to become a regular, possibly annual, event where organisations such as ours can meet and exchange views and information both formally and informally.

BRECKLAND – A TIME FOR ACTION

The object of this gathering was for English Nature to launch a document under the above heading which described the area we know as "Breckland", its importance for wildlife and set an eight point Agenda for Action. The proceedings were introduced by Mike Schofield, Director East Region of English Nature, (formerly an active member of this Society and Assistant Editor of Transactions) and presentations were given on:

- The History of Nature Conservation in Breckland
- The Conservation interest of Breckland
- and Managing Breckland for Wildlife.

Lord Cranbrook gave the summing up and made the formal launch of the document. In his remarks he took the opportunity of wishing Mike Schofield good luck in his retirement at the end of March; sentiments I was later able to informally endorse on behalf of the Society.

Don Dorling
March 1993

KNOWING YOUR OWN PATCH

The importance of knowing your own patch cannot be over emphasised, especially for those living in the country, where they may have a diversity of habitats. We have lived in this small section of the Tud valley for just on 20 years, and new things turn up even now, at quite frequent intervals. Not just birds and plants. Each year adds to the number of species of moths we have recorded, now somewhere in the region of 250 species. Anything we can't identify, or are not quite sure of, goes to an expert. For instance, last autumn a little group of an obvious *Amanita* species appeared under a tree on a grassy bank. Like the Blusher (*A. rubescens*) in general appearance, it was different in that the scales on the cap and stem, and the bulb at the base were all tinged with bright yellow. The books suggested that this was *Amanita franchetti* and described it as 'rare' so we took it to Reg Evans who confirmed that it was, though he called it *A. aspera*, which is the same thing, only from a different book! He also said that it was the first record he had for the species. This year, we have already had a "second record" – growing attached to the abundant moss on a shady part of the lawn. This is a delicate little 'bracket' type fungus called *Leptoglossum retigerum*. The first record for this also rare – or overlooked species was also on 'our patch' about five years ago, and about a hundred yards away. A look amongst the moss on your lawn in late winter might add to Reg's store of records!

Alec Bull.

ARE THERE ANY BRYOLOGISTS OUT THERE?

Traditionally, Floras of Norfolk have always contained an account of the Mosses and Liverworts. I understand that Robin Stevenson, our Bryological recorder, is considering the possibility of mapping our Norfolk species for the proposed tetrad flora of the county, though this would have to be on the basis of the 10km square, due to the impossibility of tetrad mapping with only a small handful of possible recorders. Living in the far west of the county, Robin particularly needs knowledgeable helpers in East Norfolk. For instance, he was delighted when I was able to send a list included with ordinary plant records from Gary Kennison made on Broad Fen Dilham which included a new 10km record for the rare *Cinclidium stygium* as well as a number of other species peculiar to that particular type of habitat. Anyone interested in doing Mosses in East Norfolk can

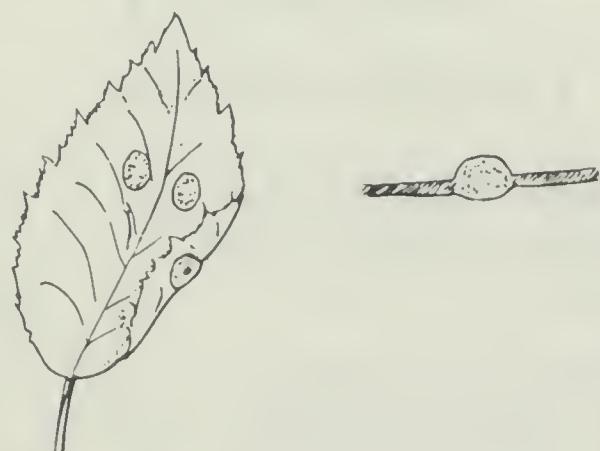
either let me know, or get in touch with Robin direct. Address on the back of the programme.

Alec Bull.

BIRCH LEAF BLOTCHE

Referring to my note on the Birch leaf gall in the last issue, it has been pointed out to me quite correctly that the illustration accompanying this could be mistaken for another feature on Birch which is not a gall. In order not to confuse I think a description of both will help to differentiate.

The galls caused by the larvae of the midge *Anisostephus betulinum* Kiefer, as found by me, appear as near spherical blisters on leaf approx. 2.5mms. in diameter, being yellowish in the early stages but later becoming dark purplish. In this stage a neat circular hole can be found underneath where the yellow larvae have left to pupate in the soil.



The larvae of a micromoth, The Large Birch Pigmy, *Ecoedemia argentipedella* Zell, also causes the leaves of Birch to become blotched with dark circular spots approx. 2.5mms. in diameter. These blotches are never spherical but are nearly flat. As the larvae are leaf-miners they eventually eat outwards from the spot and the leaf takes on a reticulated appearance minutely dotted with the frass of the green larvae. These are fairly common where Birch is numerous.



Ken Durrant.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Members who pay by cash or cheque are reminded that subscriptions for 1993/94 became due on 1st April 1993.

Current rates are:- Ordinary £8. Family £10. Please forward your payment to:
Mr. D.I. Richmond, Hon Treasurer (N&NNS), 42 Richmond Road, Reepham, Norwich. NR10 4LS.

I was surprised at the number of telephone calls I received offering me the book as requested in the last issue of Natterjack (No 40). Many thanks. Yours Sincerely Arthur Johnson.

FUNGI FORAYS

The increase in attendance at our meetings is remarkable. In 1991 at Santon Downham about 102 arrived – fortunately more or less divided into morning and afternoon groups.

We were expecting a similar number at the same site in 1992 but were surprised when a total of 260 were present. These numbers were taken by the Forest Ranger – a small fee was payable.

Nevertheless it was a great success. The small room provided for a talk was filled to capacity by people anxious to know more about fungi.

It is expected that numbers may have to be restricted this year when we organise a similar event.

Reg & Lil Evans.

DISCIOTA VENOSA

In one of the Norfolk Naturalists Trust woods we found this large cup shaped fungus which belongs to the morel family.

About 20 cms in diameter, it has a fawn to brownish colour often with a reddish tinge. The undersurface is whitish, the inner surface characteristically veined. The flesh smells of bleach. It occurs in April or May and is new to our records.

Reg & Lil Evans.



Records of Morels and others of this group of early (April - May) fungi would be appreciated.

FUNGI - A NEW RECORD

Over the last few years there appears to be an increasing interest in fungi. In 1991 a Forestry Commission foray had an unexpected attendance of 112. Last year we had a similar meeting at the same site and over 250 arrived. It is possible that the number may have to be restricted this year.

During September last year a number of small (1-2 cms) fungi were found on a rotting carpet on a compost heap. There were over 60 of these small shell shaped growths with short excentric stalks and brown gills. They proved to be a new addition to our Norfolk records, and were found to be *Melanotus textilis*.

This fungus we have not seen before and is an example of how certain species can colonise habitats that may seem, at first, unsuitable.

Reg & Lil Evans.

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A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

While walking over Beeston Common on April 8th. 1993, Cherry called my attention to a dead shrew. On seeing the shrew it was immediately clear that it was of a large size and black in colour except for its underparts which were white. A check of its hind legs revealed a fringe of bristly hairs and confirmed our first siting of a water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*), albeit dead. The shrew was found in grassland and although not far from a small boggy area, the nearest permanent water (i.e. a stream) was approximately 300 metres away. There appeared to be no marks on the body therefore it is unlikely to have been brought to the spot by a predator. Like many small mammals they are probably less scarce than thought owing to the fact that most sightings are due to a chance encounter or in this case a shrewed observation!

Francis and Cherry Farrow.

A FLY BY NIGHT

Pond dipping is a child's delight and a pastime I still love to do. On March 14th. 1993, I collected some water from a stream on Beeston Common and discovered a number of "creepers" - stonefly nymphs. With my limited references I managed to key the nymph to the family Nemouridae but could go no further. The following day I noted that one of the larger nymphs had crawled out of the water and remained stationary for most of the day. On looking in the container the next day, having previously covered it with a net, I discovered that overnight the nymph had become an adult stonefly. I took the stonefly and the exuviae (nymphal skin) to Ken Durrant for further identification. A couple of days later Ken was able to tell me that the stonefly was *Nemourella inconspicua** and that he had caught one on the Common, almost 20 years ago, in 1974. It is heartening to know that throughout the years of intermittent contamination of the waterways, drought and other disturbances of the environment the species survives. A second stonefly failed to hatch correctly and drowned, in the wild such mortality must also be great.

*According to the Key to the Adults and Nymphs of British Stoneflies (Pecoptera) by HBN Hynes, FBA (1977) *N. Inconspicua* (Pict.) is renamed as *N. picteti* Klapálek.

Francis Farrow.

BIRDWATCHING – SNETTISHAM SUNDAY 14th FEBRUARY

Murky, misty weather prevailed over the weekend of 13th & 14th February. This was reflected in an attendance of only 11 for the birdwatching walk on Sunday 14th February at Snettisham R.S.P.B. reserve. In the car park we saw perched on nearby posts, a Blackheaded Gull and a Common Gull which enabled us to make a good comparison on the difference between the two species.

In spite of the mist there was more than reasonable visibility also surprisingly quite a breeze which made us feel somewhat chilly.

There were many thousands of birds in the area, notably Knot, Lapwing and Pinkfeet. I think my surprise of the day was seeing three Avocets amongst the many waders in the Wash.

We were ready for our packed lunches when we arrived at the first hide along the beach. It was there that we though we had identified a female Scaup, but the final decision was a female Goldeneye. As we proceeded round the reserve we could see many birds, including two Mute

Swans with a last year's cygnet. We were lucky to spot two Hares. As we neared the end of our 4½ hours birdwatching we wondered if we might make the forty species for the walk. Three common species finally took us to forty-one, Starling, Goldfinch and Blackbird. The "surprise miss" was Red Breasted Merganser.

Our thanks to Mike Poulton for leading the trip. I'm sure that we all thoroughly enjoyed it, I certainly did. About seven miles inland on the way home I was somewhat surprised to see a solitary Oystercatcher feeding on grass at the side of the road. A good way to finish an excellent day.

Species seen:- Common Gull, Black Headed Gull, Kestrel, Skylark, Shelduck, Little Grebe, Pochard, Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Turnstone, Knot, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Sanderling, Pink Foot, Greylag, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Bar Tailed Godwit, Carrion Crow, Canada Goose, Coot, Avocet, Teal, Curlew, Black Tailed Godwit, Cormorant, Lapwing, Gadwall, Golden Plover, Shoveler, Mute Swan, White Front, Wigeon, Moorhen, Pheasant, Starling, Goldfinch, Blackbird, Oystercatcher and two Hares.

John Butcher

On 11th March I walked the Pingo Trail. Within ½ mile of the Stow Bedon car park I saw 6 muntjac. These small deer are increasing in numbers, and as I began to ponder about this my thoughts turned to the Bullfinch population. Since 1st October 92 I have seen only 1 male and no female Bullfinch. I regularly walk around and about Thetford Forest, Wretham Heath, Peddar's Way and the Norfolk Coastal Footpath. The only sighting was here in Watton, in my own garden.

My walk on 12th March was from Langmere to Foulmere and the Devil's Punchbowl. Just after noon on my return via Ringmere it was bright and warm. I saw 5 faded Peacock *Inachis io*, 3 bright yellow Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*, 3 Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* and one glorious Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui*. I was both thrilled and surprised. I watched it for over 5 minutes as it "played" around the verge of the forest ride before it flew up and away over the pine trees. It was in mint condition.

So, 2 walks produced 2 queries. Have other members seen a Painted Lady this March, and have I been unlucky not to see Bullfinches or are they decreasing?

Susan Pallister.

Michael Seago, Editor of the Norfolk Bird Report agrees that Bullfinch numbers have declined. Parties of up to half a dozen which regularly visited his garden at Thorpe have long since gone. Michael continues as follows: However, on rare occasions the picture becomes very different. One such instance began during the autumn of 1961 when considerable numbers were reported in both Suffolk and Norfolk. In the former county flocks of a hundred or more were on record. At Minsmere cliffs coasting movements were particularly evident on October 21st when 50 travelled south following by over 200 bullfinches there on January 1st 1962. In addition at this time bullfinches were to be found feeding on the beaches at Dunwich and Walberswick, whilst a flock of 45 became established on Salthouse Heath.

It is interesting to note that bullfinches are included in the quarry of sparrowhawks and hobbies - both birds of prey increasing in numbers. Hen harriers, too, take bullfinches and their remains appear from time to time in winter in harrier pellets. A combination of these activities and a large-scale reduction in the acreage of orchards has doubtless had an effect on bullfinch numbers.

Michael J. Seago.

31 AUG 1993



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THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

August 1993

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

ON THE BUMBLEBEES OF NORFOLK

In his Presidential Address, reproduced in the current edition of Transactions, Tony Irwin commented that it was almost 30 years since there had been any detailed study of the bumblebees of Norfolk. In the light of changing agricultural practices and the suspected nationwide decline in numbers of bumblebees, Tony commented that these insects could well repay further study in the county.

Having expressed an interest in the group, Tony let me have (for the princely sum of £1) a copy of the 1967 Transactions which contains a paper by R C Plowright, detailing the distribution of the 12 species of bumblebee and 6 species of cuckoo bumblebee then found in Norfolk.

One sentence from that report epitomises the agricultural revolution which was subsequently to sweep across the county and change the face of the countryside within a single generation - "Most of the sampling, especially in late summer, was confined to fields of red clover".

Where are those fields now - replaced by chemical sprays rendering the traditional 4-crop Norfolk rotation redundant and permitting intensive single crop farming.

A recent visit to the Narborough railway line brought home to me just how impressive these fields of clover must have been. At the eastern end of that reserve is a small area of Sainfoin, a species formerly grown as a commercial clover crop, which was alive with bumblebees. Reproduce that over the whole of the county and one realises the immense loss that our insect fauna has suffered during the past 2 or 3 decades of change.

How can we help - flower gardens are important, especially those providing traditional cottage garden blossoms like foxglove and marjoram; and of course rough areas where bumblebees can make their nests are essential. Excessive tidiness is the enemy of conservation.

Your rewards are likely to be the presence of the 6 species of bumblebee which remain widely distributed throughout the country:

Bombus lapidarius

(whose large black queens with red tails are readily identified);

Bombus pratorum

(also red tailed, but much smaller and with yellow bands on thorax and abdomen);

Bombus lucorum & *Bombus terrestris*

(somewhat difficult to separate with yellow band on thorax, and yellow and white (or buff) on the abdomen)

Bombus hortorum

(with 2 yellow bands on the thorax, yellow and white on the abdomen, but also quite common in a melanistic form);

Bombus pascuorum

(the common 'carder bee' with orange thorax).

The other six species reported from Norfolk were only locally distributed, and their resemblance to the common species above makes it difficult to determine their current status.

- B. ruderarius is like B. lapidarius but with red hairs on the pollen baskets;
- B. sylvarum is superficially similar to B. pratorum;
- B. ruderatus is like a dark B. hortorum;
- B. jonellus is like a small hortorum;
- B. muscorum and B. humilis are similar to B. pascuorum.

Add to that differences in size between queens and workers in all species, and differences in appearance between workers and males, and one realises that one would be rather foolhardy to make claims for any other than the six common species on sight observations alone.

All six British species of cuckoo bumblebee could be found in Norfolk in Plowright's time, but again their current status is unknown. From personal observations *Psithyrus vestalis* and *P. sylvestris* seem to be the most readily identified.

Society members are encouraged to take an interest in the bumblebees, and as well as the 1967 Transactions, the following text with colour plates and keys is recommended:

Bumblebees - Prys-Jones and Corbet, Naturalists Handbook no. 6
(Richmond Publishing Company).

Records should be sent to Tony Irwin at the Castle Museum, or perhaps there is someone out there who is better at bumblebees than I am and who would like to take on the role of recorder. If so I am sure Tony would love to hear from them.

David Richmond.

Collin's Field guide, Insects of Britain and Northern Europe has been a well used standby for many of us since it was published in 1973. Many of these early copies have been thumbed to near destruction but relief is on the way! The third, revised and up-dated edition is in the bookshops.

Author Michael Chinery is known for his clear and instructive texts. The first of this volume includes the helpful chapters on the study of insects that have in the last twenty years proved their worth to many hopeful entomologists. The colour plates have been grouped in the centre of the volume which makes access to any given one much easier. Not every insect in the land has been depicted. No pocket sized guide could include the vast numbers involved. The majority of those we may expect to find are there or in the companion volume, Collin's guide to the Insects of Britain and Western Europe.

It's not really confusing! The second contain more illustrations but less text. The Field Guide, as well as the features mentioned above, has excellent keys to point us on our way.

Rex Hancy.

Sunday June 13th, in the diaries of the plant recording group, Yarmouth Naturalist's Society-(though in fairness to them, they had another meeting planned) and in the programme of this Society, as the day in which an attempt was to be made, given sufficient numbers, to get some recording done in all eight tetrads which impinge on to that remotely inaccessible area, Haddiscoe Island. There is a public footpath round the seven mile perimeter of the island, but permission had been given-perhaps a little reluctantly, as it was nearly three months between applying for permission and receipt of same-to walk the internal paths and visit marshes unoccupied by sheep or cattle, to examine the dyke flora. While we waited for the hordes to arrive, Colin and I were attracted by a male Chaffinch which landed with something large in its beak, about five yards from us, quickly dropping it and flying off on realising our nearness. We strolled across and discovered a beautiful newly emerged Puss Moth, apparently none the worse for its experience.

Two early arrivals agreed which tetrad they would concentrate on and set off, leaving Colin and I to await the last arrival, the three of us deciding to do the tetrad adjoining that already taken. Not a tremendous list, by mid afternoon, but an interesting one. One of the more frequent grasses proved to be Meadow Barley *Hordeum secalinum*, which seems in Norfolk to be confined to marshes twixt Broads and sea. A number of plants which featured in the recent BSBI Scarce Plants project were recorded, including the lovely Marsh Mallow *Althaea officinalis*, not yet flowering unfortunately, and the Brackish water Crowfoot *Ranunculus baudotii*. The dykes yielded Water Milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* and the pondweeds, *Potamogeton pectiantus* and *Zannichellia palustris*. Proximity to salt water was obvious from the abundance over the marshes of Hairy Buttercup *Ranunculus sardous*, and such plants as Sea Arrow Grass *Triglochin maritimum*, Mud Rush *Juncus gerardii* and both Glaucous Bulrush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*, and Sea Scirpus, *Scirpus maritimus*. Further colour was added to the marshland picture by the tiny massed flowers of the pink flowered Black Saltwort *Glaux maritima*, and the mauve of the rayed form of Sea Aster *Aster tripolium* here and there, a plant I normally associate with August.

At the end of the day, we compared notes with the two other stalwarts, who passed on a grass which, it was suggested, was *Catabrosa aquatica*. Not quite happy with it, I sent it to Arthur Copping, who pronounced it to be *Puccinellia fasciculata*. Redshank, Shelduck, Lapwing and Reed Warblers were among the birds met with, though the most memorable bird seen was a male Marsh Harrier which put in several appearances during the day. We were also made aware that the Meadow Brown butterflies were newly emerged when we went onto the hay meadows.

After the others had left for home, Colin and I had an hour in a third tetrad, and added about a hundred ticks to the blank card, including Stiffish Saltmarsh Grass *Puccinellia rupestris*. Whilst this was the second east Norfolk record for the species this year, the first being made by Ken Beckett on the North Walsham bypass, where it must be regarded as a 'salt alien', the present record was only the third ever in the county, so far as I can ascertain.

We had a good day and made some interesting records, but so far as our target of recording in all eight tetrads was concerned we lost, 5:3! Presumably permission to finish the job only just started will be just as difficult to obtain. A pity more support was not forthcoming when we could go onto the island.

Alec Bull.

THE CAMCORDER; A MIXED BLESSING

My wife who writes "In the countryside" articles for the EDP has bought herself a Camcorder. I thought they were idiot proof, press and shoot instruments but I was mistaken. The handbook is large and full of technical terms and, while not actually written in Japanese, might just as well be so far as my understanding it is concerned. The camera also is festooned with little buttons with mysterious names and letters. Unfortunately the lettering is too small for my eyesight and this leads to desperate, random pressing resulting in frightening whirring noises from the camera and strange figures and symbols flashing in the viewfinder.

There are other frightening differences between a camcorder and an old fashioned movie camera. Instead of pressing and holding when shooting you have to press and release and press again to stop. Inevitably I leave the camera running between scenes and the results show flashes of sky, my feet and the back of someone's neck. All this shooting between scenes means that when you come to a scene you wish to record the battery is flashing "bat - bat - bat", before finally blacking out altogether.

There are other drawbacks; the auto focus is prone to drag its feet and when you are panning takes a while to catch up with the new scene. Fine detail in middle distances is often a mild blur. The camera doesn't like bright white objects which it underexposes and when you use the "backlit" button (see how technical I'm getting) goes to the other extreme and creates a wishy washy picture.

No wonder that all this complex technology should eventually malfunction; the viewfinder, which up to the time had been the only part of the camera which I understood, suddenly broke out into a rash of colours and shapes that bore no resemblance to anything on this earth. And as nothing these days can be repaired it was immediately replaced with a new one.

However having got these little grumbles out of the way I have to say that Rosemary has made some remarkable films of Spring flowers. The advantages are that you can shoot in almost any light and often the dull light pictures are the best. In close-up, the camera excels and the texture of things like tree bark are beautiful to see. There is also the beauty of sound which records the soughing of the wind and the tinkle of a waterfall with marvellous fidelity.

Nevertheless for all the Camcorder's marvels I am content to remain loyal to my dear old Canon T90. I fear that the Camcorder, because of its versatility, could become a tyrant that takes up all your time. I'm afraid that, in common with most people in this television age, I see far too much of life second hand already and the last thing I want to do is to bore myself, and other people, by playing back large sections of my life, as Camcorder enthusiasts seem to want to do.

Richard Tilbrook April 1993.

A STORY WITH NO STING IN THE TAIL

Having an interest in natural history occasionally adds a little extra interest in your work life. The following account is one of the calls I get for help.

Laurie Featherstone of Hygiene got a nasty shock when approached by a large insect with what appeared to be a giant 'sting' in the tail. Swatting the offending insect with a mop in self defence he successfully killed it while doing the minimum amount of damage – none as far as I could see; it probably died of fright after being chased by an angry man with a mop!

Luckily he took the insect to Jean Hazelden who aroused me from my slumbers to try and identify it. It was obviously a female member of the wood wasp group, the long 'sting' being an ovipositor with which it lay its eggs deep in the wood of a tree.

The insect was sent to Tony Irwin at Norwich Museum and a rapid response was received stating that it was *Xeris spectrum*. Tony could find little reference to the insect apart from a forestry publication in French which, with the aid of a dictionary, I was able to read.

It did confirm that it laid its eggs in pine trees, and as such was almost certainly imported as a grub in timber, probably from one of our pallets. The Museum do not have a specimen of this and as Laurie caused so little damage it will end up there on a pin for future generations to look at.

There are a limited number of other records of this insect arriving in a similar manner.

This is not the first unusual visitor we have had in our plant. Several long horn beetles of similar timber origin were found a few years ago. These were captured alive and died a natural death prior to being sent to Ipswich Museum to add to their reference collection.

Nick Gibbons.

WINDOW WATCHING

Whilst watching the garden birds through the patio doors a Long tailed tit flew off the bird feeder and flew directly towards me. My first thought was that it would fly into the window and damage itself, but no, it stopped abruptly just as before reaching the plate glass and proceeded to flutter up and down the glass pane for around 45 seconds.

Recounting this close encounter to my wife she said the same thing had happened to her a few days prior to this.

I have seen birds fluttering around windows previously, stopping to peck for insects which are hiding around the window frame. The bird did not stop at any time for this purpose but kept fluttering up and down the window until it flew back onto the bird feeder. I could see no sign of any insects settled on the glass which it might have been attracted to either.

I went outside to check what the reflections in the window were like, expecting to see a good reflection of the bird feeder in the window but found this not to be.

Has anyone had any similar experiences or does anyone know what it might have been doing?

Nick Gibbons.

I wonder if I might beg some assistance from Natterjack readers who, like myself, like to indulge in the study of the creatures that dwell in our freshwater habitats.

For many years now I have found the species *Ranatra linearis*, sometimes known as the water stick insect or long bodied water scorpion, to be extremely elusive in the areas where I have searched. I have dipped in all kinds of freshwater habitats including several of the broads and found none whatsoever, that is until April of this year, when I was dipping in a small dyke at Horsey and found a little hoard of them. I pulled out four in one sweep of a small six inch net and subsequent nettings captured several more.

I would be most interested to hear from readers who have encountered this species in their travels, where they are found and in what numbers.

My garden is surrounded with Leylandii Cypress trees and for around four years now I have found the caterpillar of the Blairs Shoulder knot moth, *Lithophane leautieri*, a species very well camouflaged on these trees. I am aware that this species was first recorded as recently as 1951 and that its distribution is mainly in the south of England. I have found this species in no other location than in my garden and have found it there regularly. I would be greatly interested to hear from readers regarding this species. I should like to know how common or scarce it really is and where it is found. Incidentally, I have never found the imago of this species in my garden.

Any information would be greatly appreciated to Tony Brown, 16 Mariners Park Close, Hopton, Gt. Yarmouth, NR31 9DQ.

For Sale complete set of "The Living Countryside" in binders £50 Phone (0603) 742836

ASHWELLTHORPE LOWER WOOD

6th June 1993

This visit by the Society was attended by about 30 members. These rapidly dispersed into the wood following their own interests. Our small group had a particularly rewarding day.

There seemed to have been a recent emergence of the Wasp Beetle *Clytus arietis* since they were especially common. A single specimen of the Cardinal Beetle *Pyrochroa coccinea* was seen and a mating pair of the Ant Beetle *Thanasimus formicarius*.

Numerous rolled up hazel leaves and a few active weevils *Apoderus coryli* indicated how common this insect was in the wood.

A few Hornets *Vespa crabro* were seen and an Ichneumon Wasp *Netelia testaceus*. Colin Dack drew my attention to a solitary wasp *Argogorytes mystaceus* which was about to extract a froghopper larva from its 'Cuckoo Spit'. These are taken to its nest in soil as provisions for its young.

On such a dry day few sizeable fungi were found. A specimen from a colony of *Scutellinia asperior* growing in a damp area was a new record for our Norfolk list. This is a small round disc about 1cm in diameter, conspicuous in its red colour and fringed at the edge by black hairs. There are several similar species separable by microscopic details.

Among the many plants recorded was Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis*. A few plants being found in one area on the path.

Reg & Lil Evans.

NEW ADDITION TO OUR LIST *Sepultaria sumneriana*

This fungus has recently been found at Pentney growing under a cedar tree with which they are associated. It appears in April-May. The fruiting body is about 2 to 7 cms in diameter, at first embedded in the ground then breaking into irregular star shaped lobes. The inner surface is light ochre, and the outer brown and bearing dark brown hairs



(1)

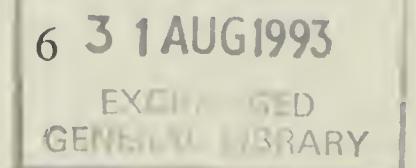
This species could well appear elsewhere under cedars in Norfolk at the right time of the year. We have no other record in 18 years, and this fungus is considered rare. When it does occur it is often in colonies and is not easily overlooked. Since many cedars grow in private grounds, it could be much under recorded.

We are indebted to Heather Williamson and Gillian Becket for bringing this rare species to our notice.

Reg & Lil Evans.

Please send items for Natterjack to Colin Dack
12, Shipdham Rd, Toftwood, Dereham Norfolk NR19 1JJ

Sepultaria sumneriana





THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

Number 43



November 1993

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

125th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, will be celebrating the 125th anniversary of its foundation in 1994.

The principal events marking this milestone will take place in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich on Saturday, 21st May 1994.

During the day, from 10.30am to 4.00pm, an Exhibition will be held demonstrating the current activities and historical highlights of the Society. Many other organisations concerned with Norfolk's natural environment will also be represented on this occasion. Admission will be free.

At 7.30pm that evening, also in St. Andrew's Hall, Dr. David Bellamy will give a public lecture "In the wet a Peatnick returns to his Broadland roots", in his capacity as President of the Society. There will be a charge for this event (members £1 - other adults £2 - all children free) and tickets will be available in due course from the Society or at the door on the evening.

We hope that you will be able to attend one or both of these events and help us celebrate our anniversary.

COME AND JOIN US

It is not an exclusive sect. There are no esoteric admission rights. There is no arcane password demanded at the door. It is just a group of Society members whose interest in wildlife is at least partly fulfilled by photographing it - preferably producing illustrations that are pictorially pleasing as well as technically accurate.

You don't have to be an expert to come along to the meeting of the Society's photographic group at the Assembly House in Norwich.

In fact, few of the regulars, me among them, would dare to proclaim ourselves as experts. But we learn a little more at every meeting and our photography, we hope, gets a little better with every tip we pick up. and there are plenty to be picked up.

Most of what I have learned about nature photography - and there is a great deal more to be learned yet - has come from listening and talking to experts at the group's meetings, both visiting speakers and Society members.

So far this autumn we have had representatives from Norwich Camera Centre showing us some of the latest equipment on the market and Rex Hancy describing his experiments with photography through the microscope.

Our aim in compiling this season's programme has been to find speakers who don't just give us slide shows, interesting though they are, but tell us in some detail *how* they took their pictures: what equipment and film they used; what techniques of lighting and exposure were employed; what they looked for in composition, background and camera angles; how they persuaded a lively insect to stay still or a flower to stop waving in the wind.

So, if you do a little wildlife photography and want to get better at it or if you are thinking of having a go for the first time and don't know where to start or what to use, come along.

Talk to members and speakers. Ask questions. You can learn a lot from our successes and especially from our

mistakes.

If you are not certain what equipment to buy or what film to use, ask. There is plenty of free advice available at our very informal meetings. We hope to see you there. The details are in the right-hand corner of your programme card.

Tuesday November 30th "Natural History with a Camera" by Tony Howes.

1994

Friday January 14th "1993 - from Cyprus to the Burren" by Reg Jones.

Monday February 14th "Dragons and Damsels" by Ivan Loades.

Thursday March 17th "My Way with Micros" by Roland Rogers.

Tuesday April 19th "Bats' Pix" by Tony Tilford & John Goldsmith.

David Paull.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Monday December 6th 1930 hrs. "Christmas Quokkas". No, I don't know what they are either. A godsend for Scrabble players perhaps? Come and hear Tony Irwin explain. In the City Library Lecture Theatre, Norwich.

1994

Thursday January 20th 1930 hrs. "Memories of Dick Bagnall Oakley". is a joint effort by his son Jeremy and Logie Bruce Lockhart, illustrated with a film and slides. In the City Library Lecture Theatre, Norwich.

Sunday January 30th 1100 hrs. A Field meeting to Covehithe and Benacre Broad to look at winter migrants, led by David Paull. Meet near Covehithe Church, TM 528819.

Wednesday February 23rd 1930 hrs. "Norfolk's Changing Countryside", a talk by Dr. Tom Williamson of the centre for East Anglian Studies, UEA. Dr. Williamson has written several books on the history of this county's landscape, his latest being *The origins of Norfolk*. In the City Library Lecture Theatre, Norwich.

SHOULD SET ASIDE BE SET ASIDE ?

I have been interested to read recently several articles questioning the value of the current rotational set aside arrangements from an environmental viewpoint. This feeling has been on my mind for much of the Summer as I have watched progress of the scheme in my local area.

Whilst I am not qualified to judge on the agricultural merits of the scheme, casual observations of its application on my local patch have convinced me that little or no benefits have accrued to the wildlife. In Spring a large field of last year's stubble was left unploughed, attracting many Skylarks. These were noted singing and displaying over the area in good numbers and clearly had chosen the area to breed. During the first week in May the whole field was harrowed thus destroying all hope of successful nesting. At the time of writing this field has been sprayed and is a brown desert. While all this was going on, nearby parkland which had been used for grazing for very many years, has been ploughed and is growing a crop of sugar beet!

On another local farm three small fields had been "set aside" and were similarly treated early in May. However the destruction here was aggravated by the bulldozing of some 400 yards of mature hedgerows and associated ditches separating the fields. These hedges had Blackbirds, Dunnocks, Yellowhammers, Wrens, a Robin and a pair of Turtle Doves all holding territories and many nests must have been destroyed. I can accept that larger fields have agricultural benefits but the destruction of hedgerows in the middle of the breeding season is unforgivable, particularly as nothing has been done to the land during the subsequent three months.

If these local developments are typical of the application of the obligatory rotational set aside scheme throughout the Country, the cumulative effect on the populations of ground nesting birds must have been substantial. Clearly a rethink of the rules and incentives is urgently required if any material benefits to the environment in general and farmland birds in particular, are to be obtained from "set aside".

DAD.

Please send items for Natterjack to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Rd, Toftwood, Dereham Norfolk NR19 1JJ

WELLS FIELD STUDY CENTRE

I was pleased to represent the Society at the Twenty Fifth Anniversary celebrations of the Wells Field Study Centre on Thursday 4th November 1993. The excellent work of this centre, firstly under the guidance of Paul and Eleanor Banham and, more recently, Christine West, has introduced thousands of Norfolk children to the world of nature. Everyone with an interest in the environment should be grateful for their efforts over the last twenty five years. We extend our thanks to all involved with the past achievements and our best wishes for the next quarter of a century.

DAD.

"MIDDLE MARSH – A NORFOLK MISCELLANEA"

This book, written and illustrated by Keith McDougall, has been described as one man's anthology of life on a Norfolk farm and gives a series of literary and visual snap-shots of a small family estate in the County. It contains numerous black and white sketches and over 36 full colour paintings. The author is offering copies to members of the Society at the special price of £12 per copy post paid with £3 per copy being donated to our funds.

Any member wishing to avail themselves of this offer should send a cheque/money order for £12 to Mr. McDougall at:- Chalk Hill Fine Art, Warham, Wells-next the-Sea, Norfolk. NR23 1NS
Please mention this advertisement in Natterjack and the Society in your order.

A GALL NEW TO THE NORFOLK LIST.

On recent visits to Norfolk Naturalist Trust reserves we have found galls on Elm leaves.

The Gall appears as 2-3mm raised cylinders slightly hairy and open at the top where presumably the midge had emerged. The galls (up to 12 on each leaf) are situated mainly along the midrib and a few on the veins.

The gall midge has been determined as *Janetiella lemei*. We understand that this is uncommon to rare.

Reg & Lil Evans.

"KING ALFREDS CAKES"

Most naturalists can recognise these black hard fungi which appear often on dead ash trees (although they do have other hosts). These round fungi on cutting in half show concentric rings hence the name *Daldinia concentrica*.

On a visit to Roydon Common we found an area of burnt gorse, the branches bore many small fructifications of *Daldinia vericosa*, which resembles *Daldinia concentrica* but appears on burnt gorse not on ash. It is easily separated by the spore size.

Reg Evans.

EGG PARASITES

A batch of 33 moth eggs found on a oak leaf did not yield the expected young larvae of the Pale Tussock. Some time after their failure to appear there was an emergence of tiny black wasp like parasites. They were each about 1mm long and the moth eggs had only one in each (33). They belong to the family *Scelionidae*.

Reg Evans.

A FLY KILLER

On a recent visit to Whitwell Common Barbara Hancy drew my attention to numbers of dead flies attached to the heads of plantain. These had the characteristic pose of flies attacked by a fungus determined as *Entomophthora dipterygena*. This is not uncommon and appears as grey exudations from the abdominal segments of the victims.

It is of interest to note that the flies collected in the area killed by the fungus were all hoverflies *Melanostoma scalare*. This species of hoverfly seems especially prone to this fungal attack as we have previously observed.

Reg Evans.

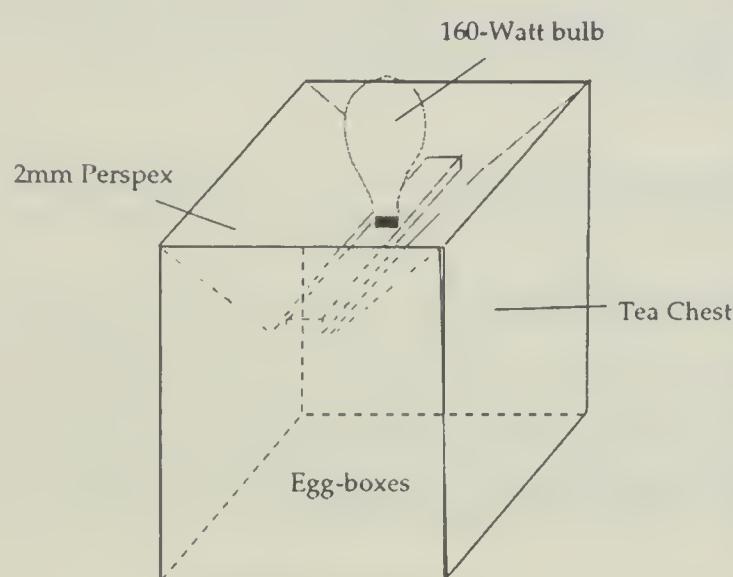
"BRITISH BIRDS" MAGAZINE

Enclosed with this mailing is the annual leaflet advertising the monthly "British Birds" magazine. The Society is one of the bodies whose members qualify for the reduced rate of subscription, details of which are given on the leaflet. In addition to publishing the annual report on rare bird sightings (of great interest to many Norfolk birders) The magazine, now frequently illustrated in colour, contains a wide variety of articles on the birds of Britain and Western Europe.

A RETURN TO MOTHING.

Is it the excitement of the unknown or the basic fact of being out late at night when so many people are tucked up in bed? I don't know, but "mothing" interests many people as shown by the Moth Evening I attended with the family at "Natural Surroundings", Bayfield this summer.

Home made Light Trap



Having had a successful evening there with a Robinson MV light trap and witnessed the variety of moths in that habitat I decided to carry out a series of moth evenings on Beeston Regis and Sheringham Commons, an area where Alec Humphries and myself "hunted" back in the mid-sixties. For this I built a light trap from a tea chest and utilised a 160-watt bulb light source. It is said that the catch from a non-mercury vapour light is 40% lower, however, this was adequate as we did not wish to be over-run with moths!

Our first excursion was on 3rd. July and Rosy Footman, Maple Prominent, Privet Hawk and both Large and Small Elephant Hawk were the highlights. As the season progressed different species were obtained including Swallow Prominent, Buff Arches and Striped Twin-spot Carpet. We were joined by David Mower (and his generator) enabling us to investigate more remote parts of the Commons. Such treks produced 'new' species but numbers were fairly low - a situation noted by other moth recorders throughout the County this year I believe.

With some of the LBJ's (Little Brown Jobs) and non-descript Micro's the invaluable assistance of Ken Durrant was called upon where his extensive knowledge and reference collection provided a name for our specimens and took our "catch" to over 100 species. Some 25 species were 'new' records, however, it is heartening to know that some of the moths Alec and I caught 30 years ago are still present. Unfortunately the rains of September and October curtailed our evenings but hopefully we will be able to start earlier in the season next year.

All records will be submitted in due course to the Norfolk Moth Survey.

Francis Farrow.

NORFOLK & NORWICH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY LECTURE

The Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society invites members of the Society to an illustrated lecture by Dr. Oliver Rackham on "Woodland Archaeology" in the Music Room of the Assembly House at 3 p.m. on Saturday, 4th December 1993. Admission £1.

FOR SALE

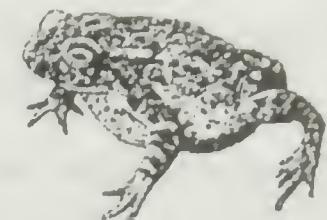
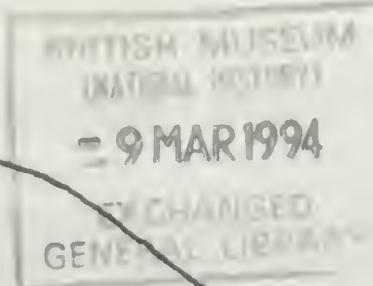
COMMODORE 128 computer with serial port Commodore and added parallel port in use. Commodore SFD 1001 1 megabyte disk drive. Philips 80 green screen monitor, Triumph Adler TRD 7020 daisywheel printer. Software: Superscript word processor and Superbase (programmable) database. This equipment is still being used for Society membership records to print out labels. Was used to produce the Natterjack when I first started to edit it.

If you are interested contact Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Rd, Toftwood, Dereham Norfolk NR19 1JJ
Tel:- (0362) 696314.



Number 44

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



February 1994

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

VERGING ON EXTINCTION

You will have seen from the papers sent with this edition of Natterjack that I am standing down as your Chairman at the Annual General Meeting in March. I hope to continue to give active support to the Society, particularly in the arrangements for the Anniversary, but would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the support you have given me over many years in my capacities as both Treasurer and Chairman.

One of the principal reasons for our 125th Anniversary celebrations in St. Andrew's Hall is to bring our activities to the attention of a wider public in the hope of attracting increased interest and, hopefully, membership. My successor, Rex Hancy, is ideally placed to take full advantage of the media coverage we trust the day will generate. The Society needs to encourage new blood (to avoid its own slow extinction!) and I hope that all existing members will do all they can to encourage wide support on 21st May 1994.

There are many pressures on our natural heritage and a number of species face the threat of extinction as Norfolk residents. For example, that traditional bird of the Broadland reed beds, the Bittern, faces a bleak future there unless the factors causing its decline can be established and corrected very quickly. Fortunately there remains a small population in the coastal reed beds from which recolonisation could occur if conditions improve. Similarly, some of the rare Breckland plants are under considerable threat as their preferred niches diminish and the opportunities to find new ones decline. Our amphibians are also faced with problems resulting from the destruction of their ponds or poor water quality in those which remain.

One very widespread habitat which seems to me to be under considerable strain at the present time is the roadside verge in our country lanes. A combination of the increase in both frequency and, more importantly, the size of traffic in our narrow lanes is resulting in the erosion of many stretches of verge. These narrow corridors of wildlife are often attacked from both sides with the plough encroaching from the fields and the ever larger lorries, tractors and trailers wearing frequent new "passing places" along the road edges. The wet weather of the last few months has made many verges fragile and prone to physical damage. It surely must be in the interest of both landowner and highway authority to preserve adequate verges on all roads and lanes if only to define the boundary between field and tarmac. Treating many of the lanes as single track roads and the creation of adequate strengthened "official" passing places seems to be the only solution. The planting of hedges where they have been removed would also help in defining and consolidating the verge. Otherwise in a few years time many of our narrow strips of green verge will also be extinct.

Don Dorling.

PHOTOGRAPHS APPEAL

As chairman of the Society's programme committee, I will be mounting a display at our 125th Anniversary exhibition. This will illustrate excursions and meetings over the years.

I am now aware that most members do not take photos of their fellows but concentrate on flora and fauna !

Please has any member got photographs illustrating our varied excursions, particularly showing members in action - be it birding; botanizing; fungus foraging, pond dipping, etc, etc.

In particular I am trying to locate a group photo taken at Blakeney Point in 1921 showing over 100 members on the Society's first excursion to the point.

So, up into the attic for a forage through old photos and a flip through more recent albums. Also, if you have a particularly good slide, it would be possible to get a print off it. All photographs will be returned after 21st May.

If you can help, please contact me on (0603) 33919.

Janet E. Smith.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Wednesday 23rd March Annual General Meeting, followed by an account by Paul Banham of his recent travels to exotic places. Norwich City Library Lecture Theatre, 1930 hrs.

Tuesday 12th April "Reflexions on nature". The annual presentation by the Photographic Group of the Society. Reflexions ... reflex (camera)... Norwich City Library Lecture Theatre, 1930 hrs.

Sunday 17th April A 6-mile walk round the outside of Minsmere Reserve led by Mike Poulton. Meet at the cliff top car park, TM 477678 at 1100 hrs. Good views of birds, we hope - and Sizewell!

Wednesday 4th May "Norfolk Heaths", a talk by Tony Leech on the natural history and conservation of heathland in the county. Norwich City Library Lecture Theatre, 1930 hrs.

Sunday 8th May A visit to two green oases in Norwich - Lion Wood and Rosary Cemetery, led by Mary Cooper and Janet Smith. Meet at Pilling Park, Harvey Lane - TG 253088 - at 1100 hrs.

Saturday 21st May 125th Anniversary goings-on in St. Andrew's Hall. See separate notice about the day's programme.

Sunday 5th June A field meeting at the NNT reserve of Wayland Wood, south of Watton, led by the warden, Graham Goodwin. Meet at TL 924995 at 1100 hrs.

Sunday 12th June To celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the Society, a repeat of the first visit in 1869 to Heggatt Hall, owned by Mr. Richard Gurney. Meet at TG 271183 at 1100hrs.

Wednesday 22nd June An evening excursion to the NNT reserve at Thursford Wood, led by the warden, Alan Bristow. Meet at entrance off the A148 at TF 979333 at 1930 hrs. Park carefully on roadside verge, or on hard standing at entrance to the Old Coach House B & B.

Sunday 26th June A full day excursion to Barnham Cross Common south of Thetford, looking at the chalk side of the common in the morning and the acid side in the afternoon, mainly for plants, butterflies and birds. Park by the playing field on the RHS of A134 out of Thetford, TL 867818. Meet at 1100 hrs. Leader Nick Gibbons.

Please note that no dogs are allowed in NNT reserves.

MICROSCOPY GROUP

This year's programme will be issued in two parts. We have firm dates for the first three meetings. The others will be printed as soon as possible for you to transfer to your diaries.

Please note that while we may continue to park on the Castle mound, it is most strongly recommended you take all valuable items inside with you.

Feb 22nd 1930 hrs. Malcolm Thain will bring us up to date with his work on metallic particles in soil. Some members may have seen an article by Malcolm on this subject published recently.

April 21st 1930 hrs. Dick Hamond will take us Back to Basics! We feel it is time for newcomers to the group to learn from our maestro microscopist how to blend the mechanics of the microscope with the mechanics of the human frame into a harmonious whole. No more head-aches! No more back-aches.

June 25th 1330 hrs. Our annual jaunt into the outdoors. This year we meet at the Ted Ellis Reserve, Wheatfen. Space for microscopes will be available. Keith Clarke will lead. What could make a more perfect prospect?

All indoor meetings include ample time for Gossip. Do bring items of interest. A Bring and Buy session is in plans for the future!

THE NORFOLK BIRD REPORT

The special issue of the 1992 Norfolk Bird Report has been well reviewed and very few copies remain unsold. Members may be interested to read some of the comments received:

It has been very well received by our members. One member from the USA asked for two copies to send to editors of American bird reports who might benefit from a new approach (NORFOLK ORNITHOLOGISTS ASSOCIATION).

A bumper issue celebrates Michael Seago's fortieth as editor with over 100 pages plus over 50 colour photographs mostly of famous Norfolk rarities such as the 1987 slender-billed gulls and the 1989/90 red-breasted nuthatch and a complete Norfolk bird check-list with status notes. A collector's item and great value. (BRITISH BIRDS)

This book is Norfolk's best annual report ever - its 40th anniversary issue. Included is a full review of the Norfolk list and there are masses of colour photographs of many Norfolk rarities from years gone by including the Birdline/Birding World emblem bird the How Hill black-and-white warbler. If you only ever buy one Norfolk report, make it this one! (BIRDING WORLD)

Plans are well advanced for the 1993 Bird Report which will include an important paper on the creation and management of Holkham National Nature Reserve by the Head Warden. Among other features: Pink-footed geese in North-west Norfolk - a farmer's viewpoint and Marsh Harriers roosting in cereal crops. Colour photographs and artwork will again include a fine selection by both professionals and gifted amateurs.

BIRDING AT BENACRE - AND ELSEWHERE!

The best laid schemes can sometimes yield a bonus when they gang a-gley. The scheme at Benacre on Sunday, 30th January, was in two parts: Part 1 - "do" the broad in the morning; Part 2 - walk on across the shingle spit that separates broad from sea to have lunch and explore the area around the pits in the hope of seeing sawbills and grebes.

Part 1: no problem. The group of 20 or so split into two parties so that we could take turns to use the hide. A pair of long-tailed ducks swam past. Male and female goldeneye dived repeatedly, usually just as telescopes were lined up on them. Pochard, infuriating as ever, slept on with their chestnut heads tucked out of sight. Teal, shoveler, shelduck and mallard were also to be seen. A flock of knot flew in and joined a handful of redshank.

Part 2 was a non-starter. In the ferocious winter weather along this notoriously unstable stretch of coast, the sea had gouged a 10ft channel through the shingle bank and at high tide sea water was pouring into the broad.

So, after lunch in the sun on beach (this was January 30!), a change of plan. A diversion to Blythburgh - and a bonus.

From the start of the footpath behind the pub we looked across the reeds to the mass of white on the water and realised that swimming among the gulls was a small party of avocets. Then, to our delight, a flock of several hundred took to the air and circled. A few minutes later they did it again. It was sheer luck. An hour or so later, they had all disappeared.

Then came the real surprise. Careful scoping among the gulls turned up several ring-billed gulls, at least two adults and a second-winter bird, obligingly swimming alongside the similar but smaller common gulls so that a clear comparison could be made.

The scouring sea had done us a favour.

David Paull.

PROBLEMS WITH STINGLESS NETTLES

After being shown *Urtica galeopsifolia* at Woodbastwick, Dr. J. Wells realised he has something closely similar in the grounds of Oakhill at Heacham. When I went to look at them with him, we found that he has quite an assortment of different nettles. In the one that is closest to the stingless 'species' it is only the upper leaves that are particularly narrow, but what is more noticeable is their very long petioles, about the same length as the leaf blade. It is certainly stingless, and the lowest flowers appear from nodes 14 to 21, which is correct. However, we also found completely stingless nettles of perfectly normal appearance, with the flowers starting from well below node 14, and others with leaves narrow all the way down that sting! In my report on my season as Trail Warden at Hoveton Great Broad in 1969 I noted "many of these fen nettles have only a weak sting". Perhaps the taxonomists still have some work to do on this.

Paul Cobb.

REVIEW

BIRDS OF THE HOLKHAM AREA by Andrew Bloomfield, 1993. 144 pages, 31 black and white plates and numerous line drawings. £7.50 including p & p.

Between the eye-catching wrap-round cover of pink-footed geese (photographed by Chris Knights) and the highly original illustrations by James McCallum there is a wealth of information in this comprehensive publication.

The most important feature of a local bird book is its potential value as an introduction to the newcomer to the area. Andrew's guide scores well under each heading including good maps. The opening chapter revealing the history of Holkham is compelling reading. It will be surprising to read of Holkham Estate being described in the 18th Century as "barren sandy heath of windy slopes where sheep and rabbits fought for blades of grass". Eventually it became one of the largest and most successful estates in the country.

Perhaps it will also come as a surprise to read that Holkham Meals was first 'discovered' as a prime locality for vagrant autumn migrants as recently as 1968. Seven years later, during October 1975, the three-mile length of mature pines (including the breeding site of the famous parrot crossbills) interspersed with birches, dense bramble and elder scrub became firmly established on the national ornithological map. Four additions to the county list were discovered during that magical period. Ever since, whenever weather maps appear favourable "crowds of enthusiastic and optimistic bird watchers" begin arriving. Andrew reminds us that from the impressive Holkham list of 319 species, two (yellow-browed bunting and red-breasted nuthatch) are additions to the British List. In addition a further seven were recorded in the county for the first time.

But there is much more to Holkham than seeking lost wanderers. In spring the marshes nowadays attract many waders together with black terns and spoonbills. Since 1988 surprises have included Terek, pectoral, buff-breasted and marsh sandpipers, sociable plover, little and great white egrets and little bittern. During the summer bearded tits, marsh harriers, avocets and colonies of common and little terns may be expected.

Throughout the autumn Holkham Reserve is visited daily by many observers. The sheltered waters offshore attract a selection of marine ducks, divers and grebes. Brent geese follow and then a winter highlight: thousands of pink-footed geese. The book describes the highlight of 1967 when Holkham National Nature Reserve - extending from Overy Staite to Stiffkey - was created. As a result of enlightened management water levels on the fresh- marshes have been substantially raised. Driving along the coast road the transformation is apparent to all. Even if parking is prohibited!

As would be expected the bulk of the book, over 110 pages, is devoted to the systematic list where each species is considered in turn. Detailed information is provided and each bird receives its fair share of space.

For many reasons this book achieves 'must' status for Norfolk bird-watchers, resident or visitors, either to give hours of pleasant browsing or as a valuable source of reference.

Copies are available from the author at Longlands Farm, Holkham Park NR23 1RU. Price: £7.50 including p & p.

THE NATURAL GARDEN

Often a neglected garden (like ours) and those that are managed for wildlife (like ours when the neighbours comment!) rewards the observant. Throughout last year while doing various jobs around the house and garden something of interest was usually seen. The following notes some of these encounters.

April 20th: Three Brimstone Butterflies (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) (2 male/1 female) frequented the sheltered side of a large (12' high) east facing privet hedge. This is not unusual, however, the given food plants, Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*) and Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) are not known to be in the area, although these butterflies will range far to find even the most isolated tree. In the evening a swarm of 'gnats' were flying about 5' off the ground close by a tree. On catching one it was observed to move up and down when settled. It was a so-called 'Bobbing-gnat', actually a small member of the Cranefly family.

May 22nd: Two pairs of the Large Red-tailed Damselflies (*Phyrrhosoma nymphula*) were busy darting over the garden pond. This is the third year that they have occurred since the pond was established in September 1988 and now number amongst the six breeding species so far recorded - Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Southern Hawker, Common Darter and Emperor Dragonflies.

June 19th: Three large Mullein Moth (*Cucullia verbasci*) caterpillars resplendent in their yellow bands and black dots were busily 'chomping' through the foliage of an Orange-ball Buddleia. Pupation takes place in the soil, usually in August, with the moth emerging the following April or May, however some authorities state that they may remain in the pupal state for up to five years.

July 28th: From discarded bird seed thrown haphazardly from our three Cockatiels' feeding dish numerous plants germinate and from time to time amongst the Sunflowers, Flax and Wheat some surprises are noted such as the pretty pink Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) from Asia and the exotic Canary-grass (*Phalaris canariensis*).

August 15th: During the evening a small moth entered the kitchen. On settling it was seen to have its wings divided into slender plumes. Each wing was made up of six individual plumes confirming this to be the Many-plumed Moth (*Alucita hexadactyla*). Later in the month (Aug. 24th.), our daughter, Ellie, noted a wasp carrying a fly to a hole in an old railway sleeper used to support a raised flower-bed. During the day the wasp carried in a number of flies. Outside the hole was a conspicuous spoil mound of 'powdered' sawdust indicating that the wasp was one of the solitary wasps (*Ectemnius* sp.) and had excavated a nest which it was now stocking with 'food' for its larva. The next day, Aug. 25th. while carrying out some pruning on an old ornamental cherry tree I noted a large dull brownish-pink caterpillar with diagonal yellow side stripes making its way down the trunk. It had a small blue horn tail and a distinctive rough-looking yellow plate on the end segment, a field mark that determined it as the Lime Hawk-moth (*Mimas tiliae*). Presently the caterpillar reached the base of the trunk and disappeared into the long grass - no doubt to enter the soil and pupate. The moth should emerge in May or June this year. This is my first record of Lime Hawk in Sheringham and also not on a generally recognised food plant.

September 4th: Another full-grown caterpillar is seen, this time crossing the path while clearing up after a family barbecue. It is pale green with diagonal purple/white stripes and a black horn tail. The unmistakable Privet Hawk-moth (*Sphinx ligustri*) larva looking for soil to pupate in.

October 15th: The garden played host briefly to a juv. Redstart and an immaculate cock Pheasant.

November 4th: A neighbour 'planted' an unusual plant in the front garden which she had removed from her own. It proved to be Green Amaranth (*Amaranthus hybridus*) from America and probably of bird seed origin. Later in the month, Nov. 9th., when removing an old cracked ceramic salt-glazed drain prior to the fitting of a new outside drain, some 12 Common Frogs were discovered hibernating beneath it. They ranged in size from about 1 inch to 4 inches. As it was a mild day they were quickly collected and transferred to a more secure habitat where they would hopefully return to their hibernating state.

The above are a few examples of the natural world in the garden during 1993. How many more discoveries await the observant this year?

Francis Farrow.

BIRDS AND GLAZING PUTTY

As a builder I may be asked to carry out all kinds of work to all sorts of properties and such was the case when a long established customer employed us to remove all of the old windows from his property and replace them with new and fit double glazing units to the new windows.

The property was originally a pair of marshmen's cottages around three hundred years old and had been converted into one dwelling on the very edge of a Suffolk marsh.

The work was duly carried out, the glass was puttied in and later painted with undercoat and gloss paint and all seemed to be satisfactory.

At that time the house was only being used at weekends and the following weekend after the work was completed, I received a call from the customer regarding the putty in the windows so I went along to have a look.

The putty was showing signs of attack from birds, the bottoms were affected first since they could reach this quite easily from the sills. They are attracted to the oils in the putty and this is an old problem, usually caused by blue tits and starlings. However in this case it was caused by crows. No matter how often the putty was made good, they would, after a few hours, attack again.

Various actions have been carried out over the years in an attempt to eradicate this problem but none have proven to be satisfactory, of course, wooden glazing beads could be a solution but this is not always possible or indeed desirable.

In the end the problem was curtailed by cutting sheets of small mesh chicken wire, larger in size than the window and fixed in such a way that the whole of the window was covered, so that the birds could not get close enough to the putty.

This wire meshing, though most unsightly, was kept in place until the putty was too hard to interest the birds further, then they were removed with no further problems.

Very often, a builder's work will bring him into contact with situations not at all uninteresting to a naturalist.

Tony Brown.

CORRECTION - (N/L no. 43 - Nov. 1993)

A RETURN TO MOTHING.

In my note regarding mothing on Beeston Regis and Sheringham Commons I mentioned the capture of a Striped Twin-spot Carpet (*Nebula salicata latentaria*). This is a moth mainly of the North and West of Britain and as such was queried by Ken Saul (Norfolk Moth Survey). Luckily Ken Durrant had retained the specimen and was able to double check using microscopic characteristics. Unfortunately for us this determined the moth to be the much more generally distributed Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet (*Xanthorhoe ferrugata*), albeit a faded specimen.

Francis Farrow.

*Please send items for Natterjack to Colin Dack
12, Shipdham Rd, Toftwood, Dereham Norfolk NR19 1JJ*

ADDRESS LABELS

Will members please take a good look at their address label on the envelope which contained this Natterjack. Reason, the labels have been produced on a new computer and new database. If you find an error please write the correct address beside the original on the envelope, place in an other envelope and send to Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ

S.296.A



Number 45

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



May 1994

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

125 - and still counting

The day of celebration in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, is almost upon us. For some of us it occupies most of our waking thoughts and without a doubt we will sink back the following day in relieved exhaustion. Part of our objective in holding such a public birthday party has already been achieved. *The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society* is a name that now means more than it has ever done to the general public. By bringing together so many representatives of other organisations under one roof for the daytime exhibition it also demonstrates a unity of purpose we share but do not always demonstrate as effectively as we should.

We are grateful to those clubs, societies, public bodies and specialist groups within our own society for so readily accepting our invitations to exhibit. Any initial fears of not filling our largest local meeting place were soon removed by their near overwhelming response. In fact, the jig-saw puzzle of fitting them all in was itself an exercise in care and precision.

That was just one part of the work of the committee set up to organise the events of the year. All its members have brought their own expertise and worked smoothly together to bring us to this point. In paying tribute to their major contribution we acknowledge the practical benefits of the constitutional changes brought about by Dr. Geoffrey Watts a decade ago. Our present committee system is clearly flexible enough to take anything in its stride!

Our President, Professor David Bellamy, hopes to arrive early enough during the afternoon to tour the exhibition. His presence will certainly ensure any remaining tickets for his Presidential Address that evening will be snapped up by the public. If yours are not already safely in your pocket, phone straight away!

Strenuous efforts are being made to ensure this year's *Transactions* are published before 21st May. This is a very special edition, reviewing the whole of our 125 years and as such will form a valued reference. A note from the Chairman of Publications is elsewhere in Natterjack.

Ever since the 100th. anniversary, certain members have proudly flaunted their Society neck-ties. More of us can join them now we have acquired a limited stock. Society mugs will also be available on the day. Produced by Cherry Farrow, the design incorporates our President's signature. How many in this limited edition? It had to be 125!

So much for the one day. That however is but one day of a very special year and other featured events are planned. Not only that, the real work of the Society, investigating our wildlife goes on and on and we confidently expect, from strength to strength.

Rex Hancy

Society Neckties

A small stock of Society neckties is available to members. They are in dark green and bear the swallowtail butterfly emblem. The cost is £6.50 at Society events. If ordering by post, please add 50p. Send to: Rex Hancy, 124 Fakenham Road, Taverham, Norwich. NR8 6QH

The Anniversary Mug

Anniversary mugs will be available only at society events as packing and posting is not practical. The mug is decorated with the swallowtail emblem, headed by the name of the society and the words, *125 Years Researching Norfolk's Wildlife*.

The reverse is printed with *125th. Anniversary Congratulations.....* and the President's signature. The base of each mug bears its individual numbering out of the limited edition of 125. This collectable memento is priced at a modest £2.50

125th ANNIVERSARY – SPECIAL ISSUE OF TRANSACTIONS

A special edition of Transactions is being published to mark the Society's 125th Anniversary and it is hoped that it will be available for sale at St. Andrew's Hall on Saturday, 21st May 1994. It will contain a series of articles covering changes that have occurred during the life of the Society to many branches of the County's Flora and Fauna.

Members who are visiting the Exhibition (and we hope that will mean the majority of you!) will be able to collect their free copy from the Society's Publications Stand. Additional copies will be available price £5.

In addition we hope to have a number of back issues of Transactions and Bird & Mammal Reports for sale. If you have any gaps in your collection why not visit Stand 14 and see if you can fill them.

NORFOLK CONSERVATION FORUM MEETING 1994

I represented the Society at the second Norfolk Conservation Forum; this year held at the Norwich City College on Saturday, 5th March. The theme was "Funding Conservation Initiatives in Norfolk" and Jonathan Peel was in the Chair.

The four speakers covered a wide spectrum of conservation topics dealing with historic buildings, the wider countryside and Anglian Water's perspective of conservation in the County. The last subject was the one with the greatest natural history content dealing with AW's interests in improving the environment at their properties, making grants for appropriate projects and improving water quality from sewage works etc. A worthwhile day putting conservation into a wider context.

DAD

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that Subscriptions for 1994/95 are now due.

Current rates are £8 individual, £10 family.

Please send cheques to:

D. I. Richmond, Honorary Treasurer, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk. NR10 4LS

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. To arrive not later than 1st July 1994. Contributions arriving after this date will not be accepted for the February Natterjack.

PROGRAMME NOTES

As the 1994/95 Programme is enclosed with this issue of Natterjack, only items needing extra information that could not be fitted on to the programme card have been included in the following notes.

Sunday 12th June To celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Society, a repeat of the first visit in 1869 to Heggatt Hall, owned by Mr. Richard Gurney. Meet at TG 271183 at 1100 hrs; leader Ken Durrant. It is hoped that as many members as possible will be able to attend.

Wednesday 22nd June An evening excursion to the NNT reserve at Thursford wood, led by the warden, Alan Bristow. Meet at entrance off the A148 at TF 979333 at 1930 hrs. Park carefully on roadside verge, or on hard standing at entrance to the Old Coach House B & B.

Sunday 26th June A full day excursion to Barnham Cross Common south of Thetford, looking at the chalk side of the common in the morning and the acid side in the afternoon, mainly for plants, butterflies and birds. Park by the playing field on the RHS of the A134 out of Thetford, TL 867818. Meet at 1100 hrs. Leader Nick Gibbons.

Sunday 31st July Meet at 1100 hrs near Cockthorpe Hall Toy Museum (TF 484422) for a look at Cockthorpe Common. After lunch there will be a visit to Stiffkey salt marsh, starting at approximately 1400 hrs from TF 965439. This excursion is repeated in December so that a comparison can be made of the area at different seasons.

Saturday 20th August A new format for the Social gathering. Meet at Oulton Chapel (TG 140292) at 1500 hours for a short walk in the area led by Anne Brewster. At 1700 hrs there will be a Victorian High Tea in Oulton Chapel. This former Congregational Church, opened in 1731, was recently restored by the Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust. In the early evening there will be another short walk, weather permitting, or indoor entertainment if wet. Members are welcome to join in at any stage.

Thursday 8th September Meet in the cliff top car park at West Runton (TG 183431) at 1300 hrs for a look at the seashore led by Dick Hamond. This coincides with one of the lowest tides of the year. Rubber boots and plastic jars with lids are essential.

SOME MORE NORFOLK GALLS

The few of us who take an interest in Norfolk's galls are only too well aware of just how provisional was Ken Durrant's county check-list in the 1991 Transactions, and of how many more must be out there somewhere, just waiting to be found. To be going on with, I have these names to add to Ken's list.

Gypsonoma aceriana. Galls of this micromoth were abundant on Poplars in 'The Plantation' on Blakeney Point (in TF94) in early July 1971.

Phytoptus (= Eriophyes) triradiatus. This mite causes a gross malformation of the female catkin of willow, a fist-sized object reminiscent of a witches-broom. I found galls on *Salix fragilis* at Heacham in May 1992.

Urophora jaceana. Caused by a tephritid fly, this is one of those galls that is not apparent to the eye, and has to be felt for as a hard lump within the seedhead of Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. It seems to be extremely common, as whenever I have searched for it I have found it, and I have records, some of them confirmed by rearing out the flies, from Heacham, Ringstead, Fring, Foxley Wood, N. Tuddenham Common, and Holt Lowes, and it is also listed by Ted Ellis in his book The Broads. There is much confusion in the literature over the identity of the tephritid flies that gall Knapweeds, Thistles and Burdocks - only use the most recent books, Askew & Redfern's Naturalists' Handbook for the galls, and White's Royal Entomological Society Handbook for the flies.

Midges *Iteomyia capreae* and *I. major*. On this society's fungus foray at Roydon Common in October 1993 I

collected some galled Sallow leaves. Most were *I. capreae* (another one that Ted Ellis listed in The Broads), but one leaf clearly has galls of both species on it, as some are substantially larger and coalesced together along the midrib. This is another group where the literature is confused, and even the Plant Gall Society's Provisional Keys appears to be describing *I. major* under the name of *I. capreae*. Askew & Redfern's book fortunately has them both keyed correctly, and there are good illustrations in Docters van Leeuwens' Gallenboek.

Aceria genistae. When I had almost finished writing this (February 1994) Dr. J. Wells telephoned to ask my opinion on some galls in his garden. They turned out to be ones caused by this species of mite, and were abundant on a cultivar of Broom *Cytisus scoparius*. The gall is a marble-sized object replacing the bud from which a side-shoot should develop, and rather resembles a cone or pineapple. It has a distinctly frosted appearance, and from it project many thickened and deformed leaflets with just a few normal ones among them. Although not in the few available British gall books, it has been found recently in several counties, and seems to be associated more with cultivated Broom than with the wild plant.

If the distortions caused by some aphids and froghoppers are counted as galls, then species such as *Aphis fabae* and *A. viburni* can be added to the list. A thorough trawl of the literature would add many more names, and I know there are several to be found in my own small reference library. I wonder how many galls we've really got and whether we shall ever find them all.

Paul Cobb.

NORFOLK FLORA

The organisers of the Norfolk Flora Project, Gillian Beckett and Alec Bull, are still hoping for help in some parts of the county, notably south of Norwich and eastwards towards Yarmouth. The tetrads (2x2km squares) which form the basis of our mapping, should average about 250 plants, but some are still awaiting their first record. There must be some of you who could make a list of the plants growing in your area, a dandelion and a daisy would be two new ones for empty squares! Even if you don't feel up to tackling things like grasses, a good list of the flowering plants would enable the experts to concentrate later on the more difficult groups. Don't let your home square be a blank on the map, so when you come to 125th Anniversary exhibition on 21st May, come over to our exhibit, see the value of what we are doing, and talk to one of us, you will be made most welcome!

Gillian Beckett, Alec Bull.

FROGS IN THE GARDEN

In recent months we have heard much of the decline of frogs in many parts of the world. We have had frogs in our garden ponds (all artificial) for at least 12 years with young hatching every year. Last year we noticed an imbalance in the number of male and female adults and this year, of the approximately 80 frogs, only about 15 are female. If the numbers should fall over the next few years, that proportion could lead to the extinction of the colony. Has anyone else had a similar experience to ours and can anyone offer an explanation?

Kenneth & Gillian Beckett.

AN EARLY BIRD?

On the afternoon of March 7th, 1994 while watching Siskins around the nut feeder I noticed a small bird in the top of the Cherry tree. It was a Chiffchaff and later that same afternoon with Alec Humphrey a second one was spotted on the edge of Beeston Common. Three days later a Chiffchaff was heard singing on the Common and as Alec had also seen Small Tortoiseshell at Upper Sheringham and Peacock in Sheringham that day it seemed spring was here but no the weather has thought otherwise! Has anyone else recorded early Chiffchaffs in Norfolk?

Francis Farrow.

